



My Embassy in Germany

1872-1873

Viscount
Elie de Gontaut-Biron

Edition and Translation by
Jean-David Proulx-Belhumeur

MY EMBASSY IN GERMANY

PARIS

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Foreword

The *Memoires* that we are presenting to the public were written by the author, at the end of his life, from documents of all kinds, personal notes, private letters, official dispatches, which he had kept from his embassy in Berlin. His intention was to recount the events accomplished during his entire mission, which extended from January 1872 to December 1877; but death prevented him from going all the way. The present volume is only a fragment of the planned work and ends at the end of 1873.

The author did not have time to put the finishing touches to this fragment itself. He left it rather as a draft which it was necessary and which he recommended, moreover, to review and arrange, if one day wanted to deliver it to the public. It is to this desire expressly formulated by him that we have deferred, by subjecting his work to certain purely external modifications, the nature and scope of which we would like to clarify. First of all, these are deletions. Various reasons guided us in this part of our work: We had to lighten the volume a little.

To be short, we must have time to reread each other, and it is this time that Mr. de Gontaut lacked. From there, as in any early work, there are inevitable repetitions and parasitic developments that we had to eliminate. Other parts of the volume which duplicated some earlier publications have also been removed. Finally, there are passages that private considerations have led us to remove from a work relating to events so recent that many actors are still living through them or have barely stopped living.

Besides the essential deletions, another task presented itself to us:

it was, if not to compose the volume, at the very least to make its general order clearer and clearer, to transpose certain parts which were not in their place, to introduce divisions by chapters, to write summaries, in short, to establish and specify a plan whose broad outlines, very clear in the author's thinking, had sometimes remained undecided during hasty writing.

It goes without saying that these changes in no way alter the author's thought or text itself and that we would not have recognized the right to print under his name a book that we would have claimed to be recast and write again. The present *Memoirs* are indeed the authentic work of Mr. de Gontaut, as he not only conceived but wrote them. All our development work, so to speak, was able to be done without us having had either the desire or the need to insert developments or artificial embellishments into the original text. Except for a few very short and insignificant transitions, we have added nothing, neither a sentence nor an epithet. To this text thus reworked, we thought it necessary to add some notes, especially to clarify the allusions made by Mr. de Gontaut to certain events. We did not consider it appropriate to multiply these notes, nor especially to "identify" all the characters cited in the volume, such a device of erudition only seems useful to us for works which relate to a more distant past.

After having explained what these *Memoirs* are, we would like to briefly state the reasons why their publication seemed appropriate to the author's family.

It is appropriate, first of all, to face an objection (which we will undoubtedly not fail to formulate. These *Memoirs*, it will be said, bring little new or unpublished information, either on the foreign policy or on the internal policy of France at that

time. With regard to foreign policy, and in particular the liberation of the territory still occupied by the German army, we are aware that many of the letters exchanged between Mr. Thiers or Mr. de Rémusat, on the one hand, M. de Gontaut or M. de Saint-Vallier, on the other hand, were recently published by the family of the former president (*Occupation and liberation of the territory. Paris, 1900, 2 vols. In-8°*). Mr. Henri Doniol had already tried to take advantage of these same documents (*Henri Doniol, M. Thiers, the Count of Saint-Vallier, the General of Ilanteuffel, Liberation of the Territory, Paris, Colin, 1897, in-18.*).

But the Memoirs of Mr. de Gontaut extend until the end of the year 1873, and the two works that we have just cited do not go beyond the presidency of Mr. Thiers, which ended, as we know, May 24. Moreover, even for the period prior to May 24 and even more so for the first months that followed, the documents reproduced or used by Mr. de Gontaut have already all been released to publicity.

Those curious about this period will still find to glean in this volume some interesting letters from Mr. Thiers, Mr. de Rémusat and Mr. the Duke de Broglie. (*Mr. the Duke de Broglie himself wrote, with the help of the documents and memoirs left by Mr. de Gontaut, a short and substantial volume entitled: The Mission of Mr. de Gontaut-Biron to Berlin. Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1896, in-18. But this eloquent and clear summary still leaves room for more detailed publications.*

Finally, and above all, the facts that we find, for example say, scattered in the two volumes of correspondence published by the family of Mr. Thiers, have the great advantage of being concentrated and coordinated in the form of a continuous story. These are documents implemented, and this, by a man who, having been intimately involved in the events, adds his personal reflections and impressions as a

witness or actor. Thus presented, the facts can seem to gain in interest, without losing anything in accuracy.

Internal, if what Mr. de Gontaut tells us about it, in particular on the subject of the discussions between Mr. Thiers and the deputies of the right, is not new, what is more is the angle from which he considers this policy, or, to put it better, the observation post from which he examines it in his capacity as ambassador to Berlin. It is less to the events themselves that he is attached, than to the various impressions that he receives. These events produce in Germany and the influence, good or bad, which they exert on our relations with our conquerors.

His functions allow him to note with great abundance of detail and great accuracy the way in which the Germans judge things in France, the interest often mixed with anxiety that they bring to it and the changing dispositions that, depending on circumstances, they feel towards us. This is what particularly catches our attention in his Memoirs. Better than any other, for example, M. de Gontaut was able to know and tell us how we were considering in Berlin the possible reestablishment of the monarchy in France and what reception the new regime would have received there.

In a work of this type, it is not indifferent to know the personality of the author to assess the degree of confidence that his story deserves. We can say that with Mr. de Gontaut trust must be complete. This is due to a set of qualities that make him a scrupulous and accurate historian. One of them is his great modesty, and in no way feigned modesty, which shines through at every moment in his book. By a happy novelty, this author of Memoirs never seeks to put himself in the foreground nor to transfer to himself merits which he believes he should leave to others.

Although he was one of the main agents of the definitive liberation of our territory and he had the well-deserved honor of affixing his signature, alongside that of Bismarck, to the bottom of the treaty which consecrated this liberation, it is in reserved and simple terms that he speaks of the role he had in the negotiations. He insists on the great part played by Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat and he would be remiss if he did not do his colleagues the justice due to them. There is therefore no need to fear that such a man will ever distort the facts in order to aggrandize himself and attribute to himself a role that he did not played.

Another guarantee of accuracy is provided to us by the very nature of his mind. M. de Gontaut was, by temperament, a sensible and moderate man. A convinced legitimist, he does not hesitate to disavow the imprudence, the excesses of zeal or the prejudices of certain members of the extreme right. His monarchist principles do not prevent him from agreeing to serve, as ambassador, a regime which is not that of his choice. This weighting, this balance makes him an observer and a judge as impartial as he is clairvoyant. The prejudices that party spirit engenders never disturb the certainty of his assessments or compromise the sincerity of his story. If he is harsh on the internal policy of Mr. Thiers, he does not bargain for praise for the way in which he directs foreign policy, and he is far from unreservedly approving the opposition made to the President by his own party in the National Assembly.

Modesty, common sense and uprightness, such are the qualities which appear in the *Memoirs* of Mr. de Gontaut and give them such a great air of truth. Furthermore, circumstances favor him. He can draw from the best sources a lot of interesting and useful information about men and things. This is because he is not just any ambassador, but an

ambassador personally esteemed and loved by the German sovereigns.

The Emperor is full of praise for him, and the Empress likes to talk warmly and intimately with him. His alliances with some of the great families of Berlin society gave him easier access to this society. He therefore has the opportunity to see a lot and hear a lot. He sometimes collects valuable confidences which he shares with his government. The interest in his *Memoirs* becomes even more lively and even the spicy and anecdotal details increase their appeal. Finally, it would be difficult for French people to read them without some emotion. What they offer them, in fact, is the almost dramatic spectacle of a man suddenly placed in one of the most painful and delicate situations that one can imagine, and of the efforts he imposes on himself. to represent with honor and profit his humiliated and defeated country.

Improvised ambassador by Mr. Thiers, without having ever previously fulfilled any diplomatic function, Mr. de Gontaut brought to this mission all the natural gifts which were to make him successful. The only policy to follow for France, still bruised from its defeats, was a policy of abstention and erasure. The difficult problem to solve for our ambassador was to represent this policy in Berlin without it costing France's self-esteem, and without his prudence being accused of complacency and fear. It required a rare mixture of dignity and tact, and it is precisely these two qualities that Mr. Thiers took pleasure in recognizing Mr. de Gontaut, when he applauded himself for having sent him to Berlin. It was sure that with such a representative, France ran no risk of being lightly embarked on perilous adventures, nor of sacrificing something of its honor and pride through servile weakness.

M. de Gontaut often needed a lot of patience and composure; he often had to silence personal and legitimate

resentments, in the best interest of the country, and it is not without a little emotional sympathy that we sometimes surprise in his intimate notes the quickly repressed expression of sadness and bitterness that he cannot help but feel. Attend court festivals where the triumph of the new empire founded on our setbacks is sumptuously displayed, renew for the twentieth time to people who do not want to be convinced the assurance of France's peaceful intentions, combat the mistrust that provokes our military reorganization and justifies it without appearing to apologize for it, dissipate the hurtful concerns of so many people who pretend to believe we are constantly on the eve of a revolution, when they inquire about our internal divisions, suffer from painful *tête-à-tête* with the formidable Chancellor, thwarting his malevolence and editing out his nasty quarrels by opposing all his actions with the most imperturbable calm, such was the always painful role that Mr. de Gontaut had to sustain during the six years from the very mouth of the old emperor, that on the eve of leaving his post forever, he received sincere testimony of the services he had rendered.

"What news have I heard," he said to her, "are you leaving us? This is a great affliction for me. It is to you that we owe good relations with France; yes," he added, taking M. de Gontaut's hands in his, "it's definitely yours." And his eyes became wet with tears. Victim of our internal quarrels, Mr. de Gontaut could at least take into his retirement the consciousness of having served his country at one of the most difficult times in its history, in one of the most difficult posts, and of having helped to spare it any aggression from its conquerors, before it had time to regain its place in the European balance. A forthcoming publication, intended to follow on from this one, will complete the demonstration of what France owed to its ambassador, particularly in the spring

of 1875, when Germany, which had become more particularly threatening, worried the whole of Europe.

The family of Mr. de Gontaut wanted to provide the public, with these Memoirs, with the means to appreciate the difficulties of his task and the greatness of his services. The reader will experience all the more pleasure in recognizing them as the author takes more care not to dwell on them. These Memoirs will not only present to him a sincere and exact account of the events; they gave him will still need to grasp the true physiognomy, so endearing and so noble, of the man who, the day after our defeats, a newcomer to diplomacy, accepted the difficult mission of representing us in Berlin.

André Dreux, 1906 NB - The author's notes at the bottom of the pages are followed by the initials. (G.-B.) Those of the 1906 publisher bear no mention.

MY EMBASSY IN GERMANY [1872-1873]

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE EMBASSY

Mr. de Gontaut is appointed ambassador. — His arrival in Berlin. — His first interview with Prince Bismarck. — Submission of his letters of credence to the Emperor. — Audience of the Empress. — Audiences of Prince and Princess Frédéric-Charles; of the imperial prince and the imperial princess. — First visits to Berlin society. — Court festivals; conversations with Prince Bismarck and the Empress.

The period covered by these memories is that of the mission given to me to fulfil in Germany by Mr. Thiers, then

president of the provisional regime of the Republic, and which was confirmed by Mr. Marshal de Mac-Mahon until the last days of the year 1877. (This period did not extend in reality, as we said previously, that until the end of the year 1873, the author was unable to complete the planned work.)

Domestic policy will find its place there as will foreign policy; because, in addition to my correspondence on both subjects with Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat, my distance from Versailles and Paris did not prevent me from maintaining relations with my colleagues in the National Assembly and later in the Senate. After a prolonged session and which the events occurring in a dismal year, in so many respects, must have made laborious and agitated, the National Assembly separated on September 18, 1871. I joined my children in Navailles and I was looking forward to peacefully spending my vacation there.

The pleasure I enjoyed there was increased by the circumstance that my department had as its administrator one of my childhood friends, the Marquis de Nadaillac, whose taste for work and his aptitude for business, no less than his intelligence, and distinguished and the perfect kindness of his wife, had chosen Mr. Thiers. Between Navailles and Pau reports were frequent.

They were all the more so at the time of which I speak because another of my dearest friends, who was very cruelly taken from us at the beginning of 1874, the Duke of Maillé, had just arrived in Pau with his wife and children to spend the winter there. An incident, at first mysterious, suddenly came to wake me from my rest. It was Sunday, November 19: we were gathered in the living room after lunch, when we saw a car arrive and stop at the steps. Nadaillac came out accompanied by Maillé; he held a telegram in his hand and presented it to me saying: "I have been instructed by Mr. Thiers to ask you at

Versailles; it is something important, but the dispatch does not explain further."

Great astonishment in the family! All possible suppositions about the President's appeal were given rise; as usual none were found to be true. There was no need to hesitate; the next day I left, and on Tuesday morning before eleven o'clock, I was in Mr. Thiers' office at Versailles. We can judge my surprise when I learned from him that he was offering me the opportunity to go to Berlin as ambassador. The press did not take long to learn the news and spread it. The Republican newspapers showed themselves dissatisfied and sarcastic, the conservative newspapers quite satisfied; among both there was astonishment, and that was very natural; no one was more surprised than me.

The impression was the same in the Assembly, and, among the deputies of the extreme right, more than one blamed me for accepting public functions under a government which was only the truce of the parties and not yet that of the parties. of Mr. Count de Chambord. On the other hand, I obtained the warm support of moderate and impartial minds, understanding that Mr. Thiers was giving guarantees to the royalists by calling on them to participate in business, and that nothing was more likely to prepare the country favorably for the return of the King than to show him his supporters devoting themselves to his salvation, especially at the time when there was "more honor than honors" to be collected.

Their thoughts were excellently by one of the most distinguished of them, by Mr. Audren de Kerdrel, a man with a warm heart, a mind as distinguished as it is enlightened, a royalist as tenacious and as devoted as the Bretons are, but as reasonable and as informed of the true state of things, of the necessity of the times, as a nineteenth-century Frenchman can be. Like me, he was a close friend of Mr. de Falloux, and I

had become friends with him from the first days of the Assembly. He was kind enough to send me his compliments in a charming and deeply felt letter, too flattering for me to reproduce here, and in which he treated our strict friends quite roughly.

Another letter that I received at the same time touched me very much: it was from one of my childhood friends, Count Guillaume de Pourtalès, originally from Neuchâtel and remained loyal to Prussia after the principality of Neuchâtel was given to Switzerland. He and his parents had left France a long time ago; but remembering the years he had spent there, during the war he devoted himself very particularly to the French prisoners; many received abundant benefits from his generous purse, and, it must unfortunately be said, more than one promptly forgot him. As soon as he learned of my appointment to the embassy in Berlin, he wrote me the most affectionate and noble letter at the same time, assuring me that if I thought I found only enemies in Berlin, I was wrong, and that he expected that I would remember our old friendship to dispose of him in everything and for everything.

He kept his word and there was no good grace or kind gesture that I did not receive from Count de Pourtalès during the entire duration of my stay in Germany. I would like to thank him here. My appointment, decided at the end of November, appeared on December 4 in the *Official Journal*. Before leaving, I spent a good number of days at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to familiarize myself, as much as possible, with the policy followed by France towards Prussia since the war, and to acquaint myself with the state of current relations between the two countries.

Delicate questions quickly arose, and it was more than natural. There was one in particular which had threatened to lead to a serious complication, and which had given rise to a

very lively and haughty dispatch from Prince Bismarck to Count Arnim, who was then charge d'affaires of the German government in Paris. The department of Seine-et-Marne was one of those that the Prussian army had occupied since the peace.

A brawl having occurred between French peasants and German soldiers, the latter lost their lives. Brought before the assizes for this fact, the peasants were acquitted. The German government was very irritated by this, and it was in this regard that it wrote to its representative the dispatch mentioned above. (Here is a passage from this dispatch which was dated December 7, 1871: "The fact that the feeling of law is, in France, so completely extinguished, even in circles where one seeks preferably the friends of political order and guaranteed justice, puts Europe in a position to appreciate the difficulties that the French government encounters in its efforts to free the feeling of order and law from the pressure which the passionate temperament of the masses places on it...

The degree of moral education and the feeling of right and honor, which are particular to the German people, exclude any idea of analogous conduct... In the future, if extradition were refused to us, we would be forced to arrest and take away French hostages and even, in the case of "extreme necessity to resort to more extensive measures..."")

There was no reason to be surprised at the emotion produced among the victors by this acquittal which had been repeated in Paris for a similar event, and which in their eyes weakened the chances of security of the German troops during the duration of the war. the occupation of our territory; but the conduct of the French administration was unassailable. She had referred the accused to the jurisdiction charged by our laws with judging murder cases; the jury had acquitted; the administration had nothing to say. Nowhere has there been

any thought of punishing jurors for a verdict that the law expressly and exclusively charges them with rendering.

However, Mr. Thiers had thought it necessary to give the country in his message a warning intended to enlighten it and to calm Germany's resentments: "There remains, it is true," he said, "the pain of seeing the foreigner on the soil of the homeland; but we beg the peasants, in your name as in ours, to bear patiently this remainder of our misfortunes, and not to add to them by imprudence which would not shorten their woes, and which could again compromise, or the safety of France, or its dignity. (Very Good! Very good!) "It must be added for those who believe that hitting a stranger is not committing murder, that it is there a detestable error; that a foreigner is a man, that for him the holy laws of humanity remain as sacred as for our own compatriots.

We beg the judges not to share such a deplorable error, and above all not to forget that our cities would immediately atone for the consequences, and that thousands of French people would be immediately exposed to terrible reprisals." (*Marks of approval and prolonged movement in the Assembly.*) We could do nothing more. The German government eventually understood this and the matter calmed down. But the wounded pride of the victors was long in forgiving France for this acquittal, and made our unfortunate compatriots held in Germany, in spite of the peace, bear the brunt of it for offences committed against discipline during their captivity, or for having enlisted among the francs-tireurs.

As we shall see in a moment, the Prince of Bismarck spoke to me about this at our first meeting, and the Emperor made no secret of the painful impression it had made on him. I had a certain reluctance, I admit, to inaugurate my stay in Berlin by offering my best wishes to the sovereign who had just conquered, humiliated and despoiled my country.

However, I could not have avoided this use of all courts if I had arrived in Berlin before January 1. This reason, joined to several others independent of my will, determined me not to leave Paris until January 3, 1872. You will understand the emotions of all kinds that I felt when the time arrived to say goodbye to my family and my friends, and to exile myself from my country for the mission that I was going to fulfil.

Here I refer to my notes taken at the time. I will do this very often in the course of this story. Perhaps he will lose in certain respects; but he will gain in sincerity and, if I dare to use this expression, in local color. On Thursday January 4, 1872, I arrived in Berlin. I was received at the station by the staff of the embassy: the Marquis de Gabriac who, having come to Berlin almost immediately after the conclusion of peace, exercised the functions of charge d'affaires there, and had managed to win the sympathies of the German government as well as the praise of its own, M.F. Debains, undersecretary, Mr. Count Raymond de Kergorlay and two attachés, including Mr. de Bacourt. I had brought with me from Paris the Count of Aubigny, embassy attaché. But, as the embassy hotel was still occupied by M. de Gabriac's family, I went to stay at the Royal Hotel, at the corner of Wilhelmstrasse and Allée des Linden.

The day after my arrival, I wrote to Prince Bismarck to ask for an interview, give him a copy of my letters of credence, and ask him to ask the Emperor what day it would be convenient for him to receive me. An hour after sending my letter, I received a very polite one from the Chancellor: he apologized, given the state of his health which prevented him from going out, for not coming to my house, and asked me to take the trouble to come to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that same evening at half past eight.

I was accurate to the appointment; I was taken up to the waiting room. I felt, I admit, a certain emotion. How would I be received? How would the conversation begin? What would come out of this first interview? What impression would we receive from each other? Serious questions and on which perhaps depended on the outcome of my mission! At precisely half past eight, the door to Mr. de Bismarck's study opened; he courteously came to meet me, ushered me in, indicated an armchair placed against his desk, opposite him, and we both sat down. The room was of medium size; the office in charge of papers was lit by a silver lamp with two nozzles.

The Chancellor is very tall and quite strong; his head is that of an old bulldog, round and large, with small and energetic features; the hard, nervous and unattractive physiognomy, inspiring no sympathy, betrays fatigue and does not allow us to discern at first glance his great intelligence; it is the will which dominates in all its traits; his very sparse hair and mustache tend to be grey. He is in a white uniform with the Iron Cross plaque on his broad chest. Seeing this colossus, you would say that you are looking at a Goth, one of your ancestors. His expression as he welcomed me had a sort of good grace which should rarely light up such a harsh face. Speech is slow and accentuated, with a certain stutter, from which one is tempted, quite wrongly, to conclude that there is hesitation in his character. His first words expressed to me with great politeness the satisfaction of seeing me in Berlin as French ambassador.

I replied that I arrived with the firm desire to maintain peace between our two nations, that the National Assembly resolutely wanted it as did the government. Mr. Thiers had asked me to tell him this expressly on his behalf, and I had accepted the mission which was offered to me only because

my personal wishes were in agreement with those of Mr. Thiers.

The prince continued that he was delighted to receive such assurances perfectly in conformity with his own views: "Our desire is absolutely the same as yours, he said; peace between Germany and France should never have been disturbed (*sic*); it is very desirable to restore things to the way they were two years ago, before the war. You will find on our part the best will to achieve this goal." He did not expand much further on this point; he offered me a cigar, and the conversation initially spread over several rather insignificant subjects. Finally, after a quarter of an hour, during which he had rung two or three times to ask for seltzer water, to send back a spoiled bottle, to have another brought, to pour some for me, etc., he said to me with gravity and like a man who escapes certain hesitations by a determined resolution: "Since I am happy enough to see you, allow me to say to you confidentially two words about the dispatch that I wrote to Mr. Arnim about the killing of German soldiers."

And thereupon he gave me a little speech of which it is not important to retrace all the details. I will content myself with reporting a passage which sums it up: "You are mistaken in France," he said to me, "as to the meaning of my dispatch. Its aim was to reassure Germany and in no way to threaten France; believe that this was our *unique* intention." I replied that it was regrettable that the commentary had not accompanied or followed the dispatch; I could not help but express some astonishment to him at this need to reassure Germany. "This is so," he wrote, "because the families of the soldiers of the occupying army were very moved by the acquittal of the assassins of Melun and Paris, and they fear the return of similar catastrophes; the German press has been very vocal on this subject; in a word, the victors are worried;

we therefore had to reassure them. - Prince, I replied, between the victors and the vanquished it seems to me that the latter need to be reassured much more than the former and that they are entitled to considerations that the others do not need."

The Chancellor, despite my response, repeated the argument he had just developed with the tenacity which is one of the traits of his character. I thought I had to be content with the assurances he gave me of his desire not to threaten France, to seek to remove any cause of conflicts between us, and his regrets at not having been understood, assurances and regrets which seemed in his intentions to be equivalent to a sort of satisfaction, and I did not insist. I limited myself to expressing the hope that this incident was over, and he barely waited for the end of my sentence to express the same desire.

The subject of the *l'Internationale* was also mentioned in our conversation, and we agreed, without difficulty, on the very serious danger that the development of this society entailed for the whole of Europe.

I told him that our Assembly was about to discuss a bill deciding, by its first article, that the sole fact of belonging to the *Internationale*, either by the inclusion of one's name on the lists, or by payment of a contribution, would constitute an offense. "I know," replied M. de Bismarck, "I am awaiting the promulgation of your law and I propose to take it as a model for the measures we intend to adopt in this matter."

This response had a certain price, because in the previous conversations of the Under-Secretary of State, Mr. de Thile, with our charge d'affaires, Prussia had manifested, on several occasions, the intention of taking the lead of the movement and to propose to the powers the adoption of the measures which it would take the initiative.

The Chancellor again complained to me about the attitude of the French press in more than one circumstance:

"Ours is more reserved," he added, "and, however, with the exception of the *Gazette of Northern Germany*, where we give a subsidy of ten thousand thalers just to publish a few communications, the press is absolutely free there, and we have some very bad papers, even socialist."

The Chancellor's assertion was more than questionable, everyone here knows that. Finally, Prince Bismarck gave me assurance that I would very soon be received by Their Majesties; "The King is hunting," he said, "but, as soon as he returns, I will submit to him your desire to present your credentials. I was supposed to accompany him, but, being unwell, I renounced it, - which I do not complain about, he added graciously, since it is to this circumstance that I owe the honor of having received you this evening. I hope to attend the delivery of your letters; My health did not allow me to be present when the other ambassadors had their audience, but I do not want to miss yours."

He repeated this assurance to me twice. I stood up and, while he was escorting me back, I announced to him that the staff of my embassy would be supplemented shortly by the addition of two military *attachés*, Prince Ludovic de Polignac and the Count de La Ferronnays for whom I requested his goodwill ; he promised it to me kindly, without making any objection to the arrival of these gentlemen, which I had somewhat feared. We shook hands and I left him. We stayed alone for an hour and a quarter; my impression was good; that of the Chancellor seemed the same to me. He was extremely courteous. Was he not right, after his victories, to be satisfied with the assurances of peace that I brought him? Two small details struck me. People will probably find me too detailed on the subject of this interview with Prince Bismarck; but I will repeat that it was the first, that it inaugurated functions absolutely new for me, that it marked the beginning of my

mission and my relations with German statesmen, and that in all personal capacities and politically it was important.

I will go into less detail in the future. For this time again I will note these two: First, the Chancellor did not once mention the name of Mr. Thiers nor even made the slightest allusion to his person. I think I got the explanation later. Then, during our long conversation, he never said: the Emperor or the Empress, but always: the King and the Queen. I made this observation to Germans; they told me that, without mentioning a long habit that is difficult to break immediately, the Emperor was very keen to be the King of Prussia in Berlin, as if not to let people forget that Germany is the conquest of the Prussia, conquest due to two centuries of perseverance and energy on the part of its princes. The explanation is plausible. As for believing, as I have been assured, that he never hears himself called the Emperor without becoming serious, almost sad, that this sensation would be even more marked in the Empress, the royal prince alone loving to hear add to this title that of Imperial Highness, we are not obliged to be indignant at this assertion of the *naïve* German. Prince Bismarck had, in fact, been eager to request from the Emperor the receipt of my letters of credence. On Sunday the 9th, he informed me that the next day, at three o'clock, I would have an audience, and that I would then be admitted to the honor of presenting my respects to H.M. the Empress.

At half past two, in accordance with the ceremonial practice of which the introducer of the ambassadors, Mr. de Røeder, had come the previous evening to Antoine Radziwill's office to teach me, I was under arms at the middle of my living room, surrounded by all the embassy staff, with the exception of the Marquis de Gabriac who, having been presented a few days previously to the Emperor and the Empress, was not to accompany me. At a quarter past two, three court carriages,

followed by two picketers, stopped at the steps of the Royal Hotel. A chamberlain got out and went up to my house to take me; it was Baron Rosenberg, charged, like all the Prussians, with decorations in such quantities that must give up count; it was dazzling! The crowd surrounded the cars; two of my secretaries entered the first; in the second, the most decorated of the three, I went up as well as the chamberlain; he sat on the front cushions and I sat in the back of the car. The attaché, M. d'Aubigny, occupied the third car alone.

The procession left, turned onto Avenue des Linden and moved almost at a walking pace towards the King's palace. There were quite a few people on this promenade, which resembled our boulevards; soldiers of all ranks stopped as I passed and raised their hands to their caps. I thought melancholy that I resembled one of those kings of antiquity, defeated and robbed by the Romans, who served for the triumph of the victors! The cars stopped at the main gate of the palace, sheltered by a portico which is approached by a fairly steep slope, as in most of the large hotels in Berlin. The chamberlain came down first; I followed him, not without some difficulty, because my sword was stuck in my legs and my hat did not stay on my head. I quickly regained my composure and took off my pelisse, while the sentries presented me with weapons.

Two court quartermasters were waiting for me in the vestibule; a little further, at the bottom of the stairs, a court marshal, the Count of Perponcher, and a chamberlain. Everyone, after greeting me, walked forward, and we went up the stairs. At the top of the stairs, the grand master of ceremonies, Count Stillfried of Alcantara, and the grand marshal of the court, Count de Pückler, come to meet us; they lead us into a lounge adjoining the audience room, where we are received by Prince Bismarck in a chancellor's uniform -

one cannot say a chancellor's costume, everyone in this military court being dressed as a soldier, — then by an *aide-de-camp* general of the King, Mr. de Tresckow, two ordinary *aides-de-camp*, Prince Antoine Radziwill and Count de Lehndorff, I believe, finally by Count von der Goltz, commanding the cavalry of the guard, and one or two other characters. While we were awaiting the Emperor's orders, all these gentlemen were introduced to me, and we exchanged a few banal but very courteous words on both sides.

Then the doors of the audience room opened, I entered alone with the Chancellor and I saw in the middle of the room a tall man, with a martial and benevolent air, standing with his head uncovered, and girded with the large cord of the Legion of Honor: it was the Emperor. I walked towards him, bowing deeply.

He walked to meet me and, when we had rejoined, I delivered the following speech: "Sire, I have the honor to present to Your Imperial and Royal Majesty the letters which accredit me to Her as an Ambassador of France. Invested by the eminent statesman who currently presides over the destiny of France with an honorable mission above all, that of reestablishing regular and peaceful relations between two great nations, I dare to hope in the benevolence of Your Majesty to help fulfill my task with all the loyalty I want to bring to it. "Peace with honor is an essential good for people.

The sincerity with which all of France firmly wants to maintain it will, I am confident, encounter similar sentiments in the intentions of Your Majesty and those of your government!" You will easily believe me, I was very moved when I began my speech. I emphasized the words of *loyalty* and *peace in honor*, to which the Emperor bowed slightly in sign of assent. I found myself the only foreigner, French, before the Emperor of Germany and his proud minister, Prince Bismarck! Really all

that was missing was Mr. de Moltke to complete the triad to whom Prussia's triumphs are due! Before leaving Versailles, I had shown my speech to Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat, and both had given it full approval.

The Emperor listened graciously, then replied almost in the tone of conversation: he had heard me with great pleasure, all the feelings expressed by me were his in every respect, he was keen not to neglect any means of maintaining peace, and he added, turning to M. de Bismarck: "It is in this sense that my instructions are given to my chancellor." I replied that I was happy to receive such assurances from him and that I would not fail to report them to Mr. Thiers.

The rest of the interview passed with a sort of gracious familiarity on the part of the monarch; he spoke to me about Berlin, about the embassy where repairs were as necessary inside as outside, about his stay in Paris in 1867, etc. Finally, he dismissed me with renewed assurances of the pleasure he would have in seeing me again and of his desire to make my stay in Berlin as pleasant as possible. The hearing had lasted a quarter of an hour; we had just introduced MM. Debains, Kergorlay and Aubigny; I presented them to the Emperor, then we headed towards the Empress's apartments, under the guidance of the grand master of her household, Count Nesselrode.

The sovereign was surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting, in full dress like herself, the Countess of Schulenburg, her great mistress, the Countess of Hacke, the Countess Oriola. When I entered, she moved quickly to meet me, told me with a certain volubility and an accent of real kindness that she was delighted to see me and, immediately, she was kind enough to take me to another room where we remained alone. She made me sit in front of her chair and showed me affectionate kindness. The good Princess Wittgenstein had often spoken to

her about me, she said; she had also spoken to him about my mother and the great and legitimate grief that her loss had caused her.

Having read everything that had been written about my mother on the occasion of her death, she was deeply touched by her rare virtues and understood that her disappearance would have been a great misfortune for all her family. (Countess Gontaut-Biron, born Rohan-Chabot, had devoted her entire life to the religious apostolate and to works of faith.) She then said to me: "It was obviously a sacrifice for you to accept the Berlin embassy, because your situation is delicate, but you did well; you can count on me so that you will not have to repent of it."

She spoke to me again about several of my friends whom she had had the opportunity to meet, about MM. of Juigné, the father and son, whom she had once seen in Baden with the greatest pleasure, of Princess Marie Radziwill and my relationship with her, of her mother whom she loved very much, of her father and his mother-in-law whom she rightly found charming. Then she got up and took me back to the living room where the embassy secretaries were staying with her ladies. I had the honor of introducing all these gentlemen to him; she welcomed them with great grace; after which she gave us a slight bow to let us understand that we could withdraw and we went out.

The same ceremony which had presided over our arrival took place for our departure, and we returned to the Royal Hotel. We were gone for a total of three quarters of an hour. My heart was relieved; this ceremony, to which I thought painfully since the day of my appointment, was completed; It had gone as well as I could have hoped. It was considered in Berlin to have had an exceptional character; all those who had taken part had displayed the courtesy, even the good grace,

that they could muster. Following the custom which we were careful not to break, all the people of the court who were decorated with the Legion of Honor wore the insignia like the Emperor, and Prince Bismarck, exceptionally present at my audience, showed an open, cheerful face, which is not very usual for him. All this was greatly noted, but it must be admitted that it was a sort of crowning achievement of victory which well deserved all the costs that the Germans incurred for me that day.

The following days I was successively received by the princes of the imperial family and those of the royal family, the title of Imperial Highness being reserved for the direct descendant of the sovereign. The Royal Highnesses are: Prince Charles, brother of the Emperor, and his wife, elder sister of the Empress, father and mother of Prince Frederick Charles who commanded one of the invading armies and married a princess of Anhalt, then Prince Albert, last brother of the Emperor, his son who bears the same name as him and is not married, and his daughter, married to Duke William of Mecklenburg, who is brother of the Grand Duke reigning from Mecklenburg-Schwerin, finally two brothers, princes Alexander and George of Prussia (Great-grandsons of King Frederick-William II.) and prince Adalbert of Prussia, (Grandson of King Frederick William II and first cousin of the Emperor.) grand admiral of the fleet. It was not without great repugnance that I went to present my homage to Prince Frederick Charles, the harshest and most pitiless of our enemies, who had in a proclamation "desired the annihilation of France. I was determined to at least remain respectful towards him, but cold and dignified. He was very polite, I must admit, and smiled sometimes, things which surprised the Prussians themselves.

His wife has a friendly air; she is pretty but very deaf; she speaks French well, which is not the fault of her husband.

This one, a good soldier perhaps, does not however enjoy in his country the military reputation that he was given in France. I had been taken to the princes by their grand marshal, Count de Kanitz, a very pleasant man, married to my young cousin Hélène de Hatzfeldt, and by the great mistress, Mme d'Alvensleben. The latter showed me a gracious politeness which I appreciated all the more since she had two sons killed during the campaign.

Poor mother! What price she paid for the greatness of her country! What is human glory for her, if not mourning for the days she has left to live? I had been very well received, a few days before, by Prince and Princess Charles, brother and sister of the King and Queen, to whom they are inferior in distinction, it cannot be denied, as well as in rank. The prince expressed to me some fears about maintaining peace, in the event that Gambetta came to power. I reassured him about this possibility, which the numerical weakness of his friends and the union of moderate people from all parties relegated it far away, to say the least.

I owe a special mention to the audience of Their Imperial Highnesses the Prince Royal and the Princess Royal, eldest daughter of the Queen of England. Introduced into their palace with almost the same ceremonial as in that of the King and Queen, the doors of a living room were opened to me where the prince and princess were waiting for me and I remained alone with them. "We have known you for a long time, Mr. Ambassador, said the heir to the imperial throne to me with a charming grace that the face of the princess reflected, because, ten years ago, we read, my wife and I, with a very great pleasure, the memoirs of your grandmother, the Duchess of Gontaut (The Duchess of Gontaut was my great-aunt and not my grandmother), and we are delighted to see

you here." I bowed. The prince added: "I know people in France; I saw some even during the last events. - Indeed.

Monsignor, I have very intimate relations with a person who, after the war, had the honor of receiving you, and who was touched by everything that Your Imperial Highness was kind enough to say to him: it is the bishop of Orléans. - Oh! yes, Mgr Dupanloup; as he was leaving for Bordeaux, I was not able, to my great regret, to see him for more than ten minutes."

Then he said to me like the Empress: "It is a sacrifice that you made by coming to Berlin; we know it, and nothing is more natural. You have a great merit in this, but be sure that we will do everything that depends on us to lighten this sacrifice. — It is very true. Monseigneur, I replied, that the pain of representing your defeated country is one of the keenest that one can feel, but it can be softened by the generosity of the victors, and I feel very deeply the kindness of the welcome of Your Highnesses imperial. "It is a terrible bloodletting," continued the prince, "which has been done to our two countries; it has caused considerable and very painful losses to us and to you!

Fortunately the war is over! Now we must maintain the peace." These last words, the prince pronounced them with the accent of a conviction foreign to the concerns of the conqueror, if I am not mistaken, and a sort of gentle energy, and the princess repeated them. "I came to Berlin," I said, "with this same feeling. We have some merit in wanting peace, but it costs us dearly; but we want it. It is also useful to Germany as well as to France. - Yes! yes it is good for everyone! cried the prince." Then he asked me for news of Mr. Thiers, after having praised his liveliness, despite his seventy-four years, his energy and his activity. I represented the difficulty of his role to the moderates of all the parties between

whom he had to hold an equal balance, which the prince showed himself to be as impressed with as I was.

The princess remembered having seen it in 1851, when she was very little, at an exhibition where her father had taken her. They both continued to speak highly of him, then the Prince Imperial addressed a question which was, at that very moment, the subject of concern among us. "Will the National Assembly go to Paris? he asked me. — Mr. Thiers desires it very much, Monseigneur, and most ministers like him. The difficulty of governing between Paris and Versailles is obvious: either everyone must go resolutely to Paris, or else the government, Assembly, ministries and even the diplomatic corps must establish themselves in Versailles. The majority of the Assembly (and I am one of them) is not prepared to give in on this point to Mr. Thiers.

We believe, in principle, that it is extremely imprudent to place the seat of government in a city of two million souls, containing so many workers always more or less ready to cooperate in a riot, fortified and located a hundred away barely from the border." The prince listened to me attentively; he made signs of assent, but, with the reserve that his position requires and that he scrupulously observes, he did not respond. "And the poor archbishop? said the princess in turn. What a horrible death! I saw it four years ago, it seemed very good. It's terrible to have murdered him! — Alas! Madam, we have been tested in every way by Providence! After the foreign war we had the civil war, and what a civil war!"

She did not dwell on a subject so sad for French people, and, after having expressed the hope of meeting me often, the prince and she dismissed me. I had every reason to be satisfied with this interview. In the imperial family I was shown remarkable good grace, which, I must say, never wavered throughout the duration of my embassy. With the

Emperor, this good grace is accompanied by the courtesy of a great lord, with the Empress, delicacy and high sentiments, combined with a somewhat precious nature, and, with the royal prince and the royal princess, we recognize, moreover, a simplicity, a naturalness and a goodness which put one at ease and make one say of them: these are good people and this is a good household.

It would not be impossible that, having brought to Berlin feelings of distrust and even distance from everything, people and things, the kind welcome of the princes would have caused me a pleasant surprise, as a result of which my judgments took on a somewhat optimistic. Nevertheless, I can say that the rest of my stay in Berlin and time have hardly destroyed these first impressions; They must have added a few features to this picture, but they have barely erased any. Leaving the palace of the royal prince, I went to pay a visit to Marie Radziwill, who showed, during the war and since, a persevering concern for our prisoners and to whom I had specially recommended some of them, sick in Posen; she showed me a letter from the Empress who spoke about me in kind terms and proved that at court they were grateful to Mr. Thiers for having sent a man of good company to Berlin.

In the middle of these princely audiences, I got to know part of Berlin society. My cousin, Princess Antoine Radziwill, daughter of one of my dearest friends, the Marquise de Castellane, received guests every Tuesday; It's the first Berlin show I've been to. I felt there the same impressions which had already assailed me during my visits to high places; at times, I couldn't explain why at my age I was re-entering the world! Reality, however, gradually made these surprises fade away. I found a fairly large gathering at my cousin's house; it is the world of the court, because in the salons of high society, in Berlin, one receives no other.

I was given a fairly warm welcome, mixed with benevolence and curiosity, not without an ulterior motive of hostility probably on the part of a certain number, — which I had no more reason to be surprised about than to be surprised. to offend, — in any case very courteous among all.

Most of the men introduced themselves to me; among them, I will cite the Count of Redern, Grand Chamberlain, whose kindness to me and, I may add, trust never faltered during my stay in Germany; his brother, Count Henri de Redern, whom I remembered having seen in Naples as embassy secretary in 1831, forty years previously, Count Itzenplitz, minister of commerce, who expressed to me in very conciliatory language the hope of see me stay in Berlin for a long time, assuring myself that I would soon recognize the firm desire to live in peace with France, then members of the diplomatic corps, the minister of Turkey, Aristarchi-bey, installed here for fifteen years and married with a Prussian, the minister of Portugal, the count of Rilvas, the minister of Bavaria, the baron of Perglas, who particularly pleased me and always showed himself for me, as did his wife, of great benevolence, the prince Michel Gortchakoff, son of the chancellor of Russia and embassy counselor, and several others.

I was presented again to Princess Guillaume Radziwill, mother of Antoine, at the Countess of Benckendorff, born Princess of Croy, who, despite her numerous relatives in France, showed herself to be very hostile to my compatriots during the war, to Countess L. Oriola, one of the ladies-in-waiting of the Empress.

After having stayed at this evening for a suitable time, I returned home bringing back some good impressions, that of the good effect that I had produced, according to Count de Redern, on the Emperor and the Empress, that of the success

of my speech in handing over my credentials, which the Minister of Saxony, Mr. de Koenneritz, had confirmed to Mr. de Gabriac; I found there a compensation for the little annoyances of my first appearance in a Prussian salon. I took care to inform Mr. Thiers of everything that I had seen and collected in my main audiences. "It comes back to me," I wrote to him on January 13, "that my speech to the Emperor pleased, and that my person did not displease, which I tell you in all simplicity, in no way out of a feeling of stupid vanity, please believe it, but because the ambassador has a certain hope of being somewhat useful in the mission that you had the temerity to entrust to him."

Mr. Thiers replied to me: "We are very happy with you at Berlin, and they praise me a lot for the choice I made... So I won my case against you, and I believe that you will be delighted to having lost it." And he added, after other circumventing sentences on the good impression that I would have left of myself to M. de Bismarck, and about my legitimist opinions which would be more sympathetic to the King than Bonapartism "So, as for what concerns you, everything is fine, and as for me, who am an old philosopher, concerned only with the affairs of the State, I am charmed by the successes of your person, white or blue." In this same letter I said again: "My impressions are good so far. It seems to me that we sincerely wants peace.

There is more: we receive with great satisfaction the assurances that I have given on this subject, because we still fear France. We don't see her get up without some worry, because we fear for what we have gained through the war. If we acquire the certainty of being paid in full, we will be more fluent, and we will not try to create embarrassments everywhere. It is up to us too, by our conduct internally. to reassure Germany. In short, tranquility in France and

punctuality of compensation payments can best guarantee peace." All this was true at the time I wrote it; but when we had pocketed the billions in compensation, many other satisfactions had to be given to the Germans to guarantee peace! In order not to interrupt the account of the affairs which I had to deal with during my mission, I will say a few words about the court celebrations which I attended at the beginning of my stay in Berlin and of various impressions which I gathered there. It is again from my daily notes that I will borrow the story.

I arrived at the time when the holidays begin. There are few courses in Europe that give more brilliant and more numerous courses than that of Berlin. On January 24, the first of the major receptions took place. However sad my moods were, they did not prevent me from noticing the beauty and the splendor of this celebration of a completely new type for me, and perhaps, at the rate at which democracy works, of an unknown type in fifty years. A little before half past seven, I left the embassy preceded by a police picket tasked with cutting off the line for my car.

After a few minutes I arrived at the large castle, I entered a vast interior courtyard and I stopped at the door of a vestibule from which a large staircase leads to the gala apartments located on the second floor. Upstairs stood a chamberlain on duty responsible for receiving the ambassadors and showing them the room in which the diplomatic corps met. To get there, you had to first cross a gallery where a platoon of guard soldiers were stationed who presented arms to the ambassadors alone while the drums beat in the fields, then several rooms where each category of guests had its place marked in advance.

The lounge intended for the diplomatic corps is the first that the Emperor and Empress visit. It was resplendent in

uniforms and fine toilets and brilliantly lit. It itself offers bizarre architecture of mediocre taste where gold and silver compete for space. What particularly catches the eye is a very high gallery, covered with sculptures and all silver, as well as two columns placed opposite, on the other side of the room. In the time of the great Frederick, the tribune and columns were truly made of solid silver, as were the numerous decorations on the walls and ceiling. The King of Prussia, at the time of starting the Seven Years' War with rather poor finances, needed money; To obtain it, he melted the metal which filled this room.

We know the result of this war; it allowed us to say that as a skilled alchemist this king converted silver into gold. The solid silver was replaced by a light layer of the same metal, and nothing has been changed since that time. At eight o'clock, a little before the arrival of the court, the master of ceremonies, M. de Røeder, invited the members of the diplomatic corps to line up around the room. This usage followed in all courts led to the name circle being given to the receptions of sovereigns. The men were on one side and the women on the other. The ambassador of Austria-Hungary, Count Karolyi, having handed over his credentials before his colleague's present (The English ambassador, Lord Odo Russell, who was the first of all to submit his credentials and who was therefore dean of the diplomatic corps, was absent. (G.-B.)), came first, near the front door, dressed in a superb Hungarian costume; after him came M. d'Oubril, Russian ambassador, and then me.

Then all the ministers were arranged according to the time of their entry into office. Behind each of the ambassadors and ministers stood their staff, advisors, secretaries, attachés. The same order was observed opposite among the ladies of the diplomatic corps; the two rows met at the other end of the room. Prince Bismarck appeared in his chancellor's uniform,

such as I had already seen him at the Emperor's. He was smiling, said a few words to the ambassadors, then, crossing, he came to me and shook my hand. The vein of good humor had not dried up. We talked for about ten minutes about his major occupations, his intention of going to rest soon in the countryside, the recent change of the minister of religion, Mr. de Miessler, his close friend for ten years, he said, but who for two years had been nothing more than that, a good friend, but an impossible colleague.

This ministerial modification had caused him great concern, as the King is tormented every time religion is involved in some matter; finally, it was done. — The King's concerns on this occasion were very natural. It was not only, in fact, one man who replaced another in the ministry of religion, it was a system that Prince Bismarck substituted for another; the appointment of Doctor Falk inaugurated this famous *Kulturkampf* which has held such an important place, and, from all points of view, such an unfortunate place in the religious affairs of Germany.

The minister of religion Miessler, who had fulfilled these functions since 1862, was replaced by Doctor Falk on January 22, 1872. He had already displeased the liberals for a long time, who did not consider him firm enough to lead the fight against the Catholic Church. He nevertheless presented, at the end of December 1871, a bill on the inspection of schools which was a weapon specially directed against this Church. When the discussion began in the Prussian Chamber of Deputies, the liberals united to declare that they adhered to it in principle, but that Mr. de Miessler was not the man needed to ensure its execution. This was the occasion of his downfall. His successor, Doctor Falk, vigorously supported by Prince Bismarck, succeeded in having the project voted on, on February 13, in the Chamber of Deputies, by 207 votes

against 155, and, in the first days of March, in the Chamber of the lords, by 125 votes to 76.

According to previous legislation, the inspection of schools fell by right to the Catholic and Protestant clergy. The new law, on the contrary, established in principle that the supervision of all public and private educational establishments belonged to the State. It followed that the people responsible for this supervision, even being members of the clergy, had to be considered as exercising it in the name and by a mandate of the State, and that the latter was responsible for appointing or dismissing them at will. The ministry denied wanting to remove the inspection of schools from the clergy and remove them from the influence of the Churches. He claimed to only pursue the recognition of his right, to use it in cases where he deemed it appropriate. In reality, the law mainly targeted the Catholic clergy of the Polish populations, whom Prince Bismarck criticized for not ensuring, in schools, the teaching of the German language and for obstructing the Germanization of the country.

The orthodox Protestants united with the Catholics to mount a very strong opposition to the bill, over which the ministry did not triumph without a struggle.) Then continuing in the same half-serious, half-caustic tone, which is one of his character traits, he said to me: "We've had a rainstorm these days! — A shower? what do you mean? - Yes! a shower, but not a real storm, the resignation of Mr. Thiers. They eagerly brought me a dispatch from Paris with this superscription in large letters: Resignation of Mr. Thiers. That's good, I said, leave that, let's wait for a second dispatch. News arrived the next day: it was the withdrawal of the resignation. I was counting on it!" — Indeed, in a moment of irritation caused by the objections he encountered in the Assembly regarding the discussion on the necessary increase in our resources, Mr.

Thiers had given his resignation and withdrew it after the unanimous vote of a resolution of the Assembly which refused to receive it. This incident had worried political circles in Berlin, and I had to take care of reassuring them. The interview continued on this subject.

Then we announced: the Emperor! Instantly all the hubbub of conversations stopped. The procession entered through the door on the ladies' side. The chamberlains marched at the head, then the great charges of the court, then the Emperor escorted by his *aides-de-camp* and the Empress, whose train was carried by pages, followed by her ladies. Prince Bismarck went to stand behind the Emperor, who began his tour with the ambassadors, while the Empress saw the women first. Each of the sovereigns stopped for just one or two minutes in front of each head of mission or in front of the ladies, exchanged a few words with them, had the staff and foreigners introduced to them, then moved on to others.

It was a truly imposing spectacle, this slow passage of the King and Queen, followed by their house, around this circle where, in the light of countless candles, the embroidery of the uniforms, the brilliance of the decorations, the jewels with which the women were covered, the Austrian ambassador in the front row with her charming face, a dazzling complexion, a gentle and cheerful physiognomy at the same time, the Duchess of Ossuna, born Princess of Salm, of remarkable beauty, of superb size, and adorned with diamonds almost as beautiful as those of the Empress, then the Countess of Rivas, wife of the Minister of Portugal, Mrs. Dering, wife of the undersecretary of the embassy English, etc., etc.

The King stopped short with me, but the Queen much more, and she was, as at her first audience, full of good grace. Finally, after having covered the entire circle, the sovereigns accompanied by their procession passed into the next room,

where the titled persons, the dukes and duchesses, princes and princesses were gathered; from there they had to go to the salons containing the other categories of people admitted to the honor of paying court to them.

Meanwhile the diplomatic corps was heading towards the large salon called: White Room, where the concert was going to be given; it is a fairly long journey through several large rooms, including a long gallery where all the officers present in Berlin and the surrounding area are located. Little by little the White Room was filled with all those whom the Emperor and Empress had left behind after receiving their homage; everyone took the place assigned to them by their rank. Finally, a good half hour after us, the sovereigns, surrounded by the princes of their family, made their entrance, then everyone sat down. The seats were mostly arranged along the length of the room, perpendicular to the musicians' platform.

The Emperor and the Empress were seated on their thrones, having next to them, on the right and on the left, the princes and princesses of the blood, and behind them the great dignitaries of the Empire and their houses. To the right of the Emperor, the Imperial Princess, Prince Charles, the Duchess of Mecklenburg, daughter of Prince Albert, then Prince Frédéric-Charles and Prince Adalbert, Grand Admiral. To the left of the Empress, Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, charming young prince, son of the Queen of England, therefore the brother of the Imperial Princess, Princess Charles, the Prince Imperial, the grand reigning Duke of Mecklenburg, son of a sister of the King, finally Prince Alexander.

The princesses had beautiful dresses, remarkable especially for the long and superb trains which the pages had taken care, when their mistresses were seated, to display in

front of them, on the stands, in the greatest possible extent. The Queen wore a white dress with wide brown velvet bands and large bows of the same color. Around her neck she had two magnificent rivers of diamonds with a host of pendants as big as a thumbnail; the bodice and the entire front of the dress were also enhanced by the most beautiful diamonds in the world. Princess Charles had a white dress with lots of tulle and lace and jewelry. The princess royal's dress was dark sky blue; her train was covered with garlands and embroidered silk festoons of the same color as the rest of the dress.

Finally, Duchess G. of Mecklenburg also wore a white dress magnificently embroidered with white silk. In front of Their Majesties, at a distance of barely two or three meters, sat on armchairs the three ambassadors and the two ambassadors, Count and Countess Karolyi, Mr. and Mrs. d'Oubril and me. Behind them, on one side, all the ladies of the diplomatic corps, on the other, women of the court, the princesses in the first row, then the foreigners; at the bottom were all the members of the legations.

Finally, parallel to the musicians' platform and facing them sat or stood the invited foreigners, in small numbers, the generals, then the officers of all ranks, the men forming the court society. It didn't take long for the concert to begin. Until then I had been dominated mainly by curiosity. A spectacle so new to me, this brilliant and imposing meeting, the obligatory conversations, all this had hardly left me the leisure to think. It was different when the Emperor and the Empress had made their entrance, when silence had established itself and the first strains of music were heard. Then my heart began to sink and I sank deep within myself; I realized the spectacle I had before my eyes. It was our conquerors that I saw before me, those who had beaten us, reduced us, mercilessly ransomed us, the

Emperor, the royal prince, Frederick Charles, Moltke himself, all their generals.

For the first time since their victory, perhaps unheard of in history, the court gathered in a great celebration made certainly more brilliant in the eyes of the Germans by the brilliance of their success, and I was at the foot of their throne, I, the representative of France defeated, diminished, weakened and all the more humiliated because it was torn apart still by other adversaries more terrible than the Prussians themselves, as enemies as they at least of greatness and of the prosperity of France, the instigators of a horrible civil war added to the foreign war; I had to be there like the victim in front of the executioner. It is true that I was not alone in this cruel situation.

The colleagues around me were also representatives of states that the powerful claw of the Black Eagle had equally torn apart or kept under its dependence, Austria defeated four years before France, not as cruelly treated as it, but chained to its conqueror and appearing almost as sick as France, Russia apparently strong, honoring itself with a friendship which gives it the illusion of security, in reality powerless and almost at the mercy of the Germany which does not allow it any other alliance than its own, Denmark half crushed, the secondary states of Germany reduced to the state of vassalage. It was the whole of Europe, except for England, at the feet of its Masters! Despite the painful emotions that I was experiencing, I would be ungrateful if I did not recognize the softening that Providence had prepared for me in the midst of such a difficult task.

The Radziwill household was full of consideration, thoughtfulness and kindness for me. And then, at the court itself, I had already encountered sympathies that I believed to be sincere; I collected new proofs of this between the two

parts of the concert. At this time, the imperial family comes down from its platform and goes to speak with the company. The royal princess, opposite whom I found myself placed, immediately came to me; she asked me with affectionate interest for news of my children, was grieved with kindness by the news I gave her of my daughter Geneviève, who was quite ill at the moment, then she said to me a few words about the war, full of horror, which I appreciated the kind intention for a moment. She stayed there for about ten minutes and only left when her mother-in-law arrived.

The Empress was kind enough to speak to me for a long time, in excellent, delicate, elevated language. The royal prince was also very kind; he introduced me to his brother-in-law the Duke of Connaught. Finally the Emperor and Prince Charles also came to speak with me in gracious and familiar terms. The evening did not end without me being able to regain enough freedom of mind to admire the beautiful execution of the pieces and the magnificent voice of a very famous singer in Berlin, Mrs. Lucca, married to a Prussian officer. Around a quarter past eleven the concert was over, the princes withdrew, the crowd slowly left the White Room, and at midnight I was at home, reflecting, in a silence interrupted by no noise from outside, and by a great moonlight, to this brilliant celebration, to these harmonious accords, to all these princes, to this exchange of homage and words, in a word, to everything that was making so much noise a few moments ago and who, at present, vanished like everything that is this world, vanished to be lost in eternity!

Other festivals followed this one; in none of the attentions and benevolence of the princes and the Empress in particular failed me. Balls are always interrupted by a supper; At one of these balls, I followed the princes, like all the ambassadors, giving my arm to a woman with a charming face

and very distinguished character, Princess Ferdinand Radziwill, née Sapieha.

The Radziwills, being quite close relatives of the royal family, are very well treated at court, without however holding any particular rank there. After supper, the Empress went to settle down, according to custom, in the great gallery and had the ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps seated next to her successively. One of the subjects she liked to talk to me about most was that of Princess Léonille Wittgenstein, whom she loved and appreciated almost as much as I did. Her portrait is placed in a small study, at the back of her private apartments, which she instructed the Duchess of Sagan to show me during the ball, telling me, with an air of tenderness touching for the princess, to give special attention to this charming portrait.

One of Berlin's most original festivals is the Opera Ball. The parterre is covered with a floor placed at stage level and extending to the lodges. The room is lit *a giorno*. The lodges are filled with women in full ball gowns and men in uniform or evening tailcoats. A crowd of all ranks, but remarkable for its perfect outfit, fills the floor. At the first one which I attended, we saw in the proscenium, on one side, the Emperor, the Empress, the prince royal, the prince and princess Charles, the prince Frédéric Charles, the duchess William of Mecklenburg and her husband, then Prince F. ds Hohenzollern, the ladies-in-waiting, the chamberlains, etc. Opposite, the lodges intended for the diplomatic corps.

I was in one of them with the Minister of the King's Household, Baron Schleinitz and his wife. The Baron twice served as Foreign Minister and President of the Council; he is a man of great intelligence, of the best tone, speaking our language like a Frenchman, moreover, a personal friend of the

sovereign and profoundly conservative; but he is Bismarck's *bête noire*, probably for this double reason.

Baroness Schleinitz, through the grace of her mind, her intelligence, her talents as a musician, is one of the most distinguished women, if not the most distinguished, of the German society.

Next to our boxes were those of the dukes and princes of the Empire, then those of the rest of the court. The ball opened with a Polish dance or, to speak more precisely, a march, all around the room, by the King giving the hand to his sister-in-law, Princess Charles, followed by the Queen led by the royal prince. The general director of the theater, Mr. de Hûlsen, preceded them, easily opening the crowded ranks of the crowd, which greeted, with a mixture of respect and affection, the royal procession and closed in on its steps immediately afterwards.

The Polish finished, the dancing begins, everyone from the court joins in and the ball does not end before one o'clock in the morning. It is a very beautiful and characteristic spectacle which is only seen in Berlin, something of which the Prussians are very proud. It was at one of these celebrations that Prince Charles told me that, during the reign of the Commune in Paris, Bismarck, at his request, had written to one of its members to beg him to spare the life of the Archbishop of Paris and Abbot Deguerry, but, as soon as this correspondence became known, the Commune would have expelled this member from it.

On February 23, there was another big concert at the palace in honor of the King and Queen of Württemberg. My daughters Marie and Adèle had arrived from Paris the day before. The Empress, having learned of it, had kindly asked me to bring them; she had them introduced by Countess Karolyi and graciously congratulated them on their arrival,

intended, she said, to put an end to their father's somewhat painful solitude; she was kind enough to go and bet them again in the middle of the concert. The royal prince was also charming to them; he wanted to be introduced to them and expressed to them with the best grace in the world the hope that they would enjoy Berlin. Once the circle was over, we followed the Empress and the Queen of Württemberg into a beautiful white room, in the shape of a rotunda, supported by a row of columns, where the concert was to be given. Against the columns, in accordance with the custom followed at court for small evenings, tables were set up, around which the guests were seated, according to their rank; each of them was presided over by one of the princes or by one of the princesses.

The middle one was presided over by the Empress, having on her right the Queen of Württemberg and on her left the crown prince of this kingdom, nephew of the current king, serving in a Prussian regiment. Next to the Queen of Württemberg sat the English Ambassador, then the Duchess of Ossuna, the Austrian Ambassador, Princess Marie Radziwill, me, the Russian Ambassador, Prince Augustus of Württemberg, commanding the royal guard, the Dowager Princess Radziwill and the Grand Equerry of the King of Württemberg. It was the first time, since the proclamation of the Empire which had converted the sovereigns of the secondary states of Germany into simple vassals, that the king and queen of Württemberg came to Berlin.

Queen Olga, sister of the Russian Emperor, felt the humiliation of her new position more deeply than her husband. Upright in her seat, speaking little, serious, tears flowed silently through twice during the concert on his noble and beautiful face, which moral and physical suffering had deepened before his time. Russell was probably the only one

to see them, and it was he who told me about it. After the concert, a supper was served on each of the tables, but most of those present, being Catholics, took nothing because of the Lent period which had entered. It is right, on this occasion, to point out the respect shown at court for Catholic customs; Would to God that we extended it to the exercise of religion!

Every Shrove Tuesday, there is a ball at the palace. At half past eleven at the latest, the dancing stops, supper is served, and around midnight, that is to say on the threshold of Ash Wednesday, everything is over. In more than one Catholic country things do not go as smoothly as in this Protestant court.

CHAPTER II

THE DELIVERANCE OF PRISONERS

Efforts of the French government to convince Germany that it harbors no thoughts of imminent revenge. — Interest aroused in France by the fate of prisoners held in Germany. — Conversations between Mr. de Gontaut on the subject of their delivery with Mr. de Thile, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; — with the Emperor. — General de Manteuffel intervenes on their behalf. — Amnesty for military prisoners. — A dinner with Prince Bismarck; Mr. de Gontaut pleads with him the cause of civilian prisoners. — Sensitivity of the Chancellor. — Amnesty for civilian prisoners.

If the general object of my mission was the reestablishment of peaceful relations between France and Germany, it was necessary, to fully achieve this goal, to resolve numerous specific questions. The first and most important of all concerned the payment of the war indemnity, amounting in

principal to the enormous figure of five billion, plus interest and other royalties also representing considerable sums.

Another, which was very close to our hearts, was the deliverance and repatriation of a certain number of French people held in Germany despite the peace, either because of certain offenses they allegedly committed during their imprisonment, or for their participation in the attacks by the Free Corps against German troops. On this last point had been shot on place and without pity most of those they had taken.

The rest were sent to Germany to undergo long and rigorous detention. These two main questions were joined by others of a relatively secondary nature: thus, the resumption of our diplomatic relations with the small states of Germany, and the revision of our trade treaties with all of Europe.

Mr. Thiers hoping to find, in the increase in customs tariffs, significant resources to honor our commitments. Above all, it was important to dispel the victors' suspicions against the thought of imminent revenge.

These mistrusts, certainly, were more affected than sincere; whatever they were, they were expressed in all forms, almost always in a way that was painful for us: hurtful procedures, offensive remarks, bitter and provocative newspaper articles. Distrust and hostility emerged at all times, sometimes under one pretext, sometimes under another, one day, regarding the reorganization of the French army and the preparation for revenge, another day, regarding the disunity between the Assembly and Mr. Thiers and the resignation of the latter, then the advent, which was feared, of Gambetta in business; pretext or reason, nothing was neglected against us, and Germany got used to regarding these suspicions and these fears as perfectly well founded. By dint of good faith, correctness in our attitude, regularity in fulfilling all our

commitments, at the cost of the heaviest sacrifices, we were determined to give them a complete denial.

During his first message, dated December 7, 1871, Mr. Thiers had said in language whose sincerity as well as simple pride had won the applause of the entire National Assembly: "The external situation is as calm as we can hope for it following an unfortunate war. Our policy is peace, peace without discouragement or bravado, with the conviction that reorganized France will always be necessary to Europe, and always capable of fulfilling its duties towards others and towards itself.

If, against her will and against all probability, new events could occur, these events would not be her work, because she is determined to avoid them, far from trying to bring them into being.

"She has said it to all the governments: she is busy restoring its finances and its army, with no other plan than to remain France, what it must desire, what everyone must desire like it does."

"She therefore wants peace; she declares it on her honor and will not fail in this word solemnly given!" (Alright! Alright!)

Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat repeated these assurances to me, in all forms, in all their confidential letters. The Duke de Broglie and the Duke Decazes, under the presidency of Marshal Mac-Mahon, did not express themselves differently from their predecessors.

Our loyalty was therefore perfect, and our actions never deviated from it; but we were dealing with a conqueror difficult to convince, perhaps impossible to satisfy, I would almost dare to say, if not for the Emperor, at least for others, conceiving some hope of not being satisfied, after us having imposed such appalling compensation. The task, in this

respect, was therefore very difficult. Mr. Thiers' instructions, those he gave me orally, those he constantly repeated to me in his letters, were impeccably clear. I have had occasion to read his letters, either to Prussians or to my colleagues; I could have shown them all. I was absolutely sincere in telling Prince Bismarck that I would not have come to Berlin if I had not encountered, in the public authorities of my country, views that we, in accordance with mine, on the necessity and loyal observance of peace. But, I repeat, it took us a lot of effort, it took us a lot of time to convince the German government of our good faith and our desire, as well as the possibility, of strictly keeping all our commitments.

The deliverance of our prisoners, held in Germany since the peace, was a question giving rise to the most lively and natural concerns in the families of these unfortunate people; it was, moreover, the object of a certain agitation in France, where people did not realize the obstinacy displayed by the German government in retaining them. But the President and his ministers knew the rigor of German doctrines on the Free Corps; they knew the irritation produced in Germany by the acquittals of Paris and Melun; they therefore understood the necessary precautions to be taken to obtain a favorable solution.

M. de Rémusat, writing to me on this subject a few days after my arrival in Berlin, did not believe that the moment had arrived to obtain general amnesty, nor perhaps even particular pardons, and, while leaving it up to me to decide whether to act, he recommended that I exercise great caution and not rush into anything.

A courageous and devoted woman, Mrs. Cahen, had recently given him information capable of raising our hopes. She had just traveled through Germany and visited our prisoners there; she had interested two considerable people in

their cause, General de Stosch and M. de Keudell, and she had even been received by the Empress, in whom she had found great benevolence, from whom she had received the promise of her intervention timely and the assurance of the renewal of efforts already made in this direction. It was something, but it wasn't enough.

In France, it must be admitted, the question of the Free Corps was not judged with all the necessary fairness; we were blinded by a very natural feeling, a patriotic feeling, the right to defend, at all costs, the national territory invaded by enemies, a sacred feeling, in a certain sense, and which regards everything as permitted to give satisfaction.

This feeling, incontestably, gave birth to prodigies of heroism, as in Spain and in Russia in the first years of this century, as in France during the last war. But we did not pay attention to the fact that these miracles in turn gave rise to terrible reprisals, to horrible cruelties, so that the war necessarily took on a character of atrocity and savagery. This is what modern international law wanted to avoid by imposing certain rules favorable to humanity on the way of waging war. To a certain point, the vigor of our demands was therefore unfounded. But was Germany blameless for this? She could have the right to herself; but who does not know this axiom: *Summum jus summa injuria*?

One can be both within strict law and outside of humanity. A pitiless rigor in the exercise of its rights as a belligerent, a severity going as far as cruelty towards the Free Corps and sometimes towards the hostages it took, the harshness and the incredible rise in the number of its requisitions of all kinds, in kind and in money, not to mention here the leonine conditions of peace, this is what made the law of Germany, whose leaders invoked Providence at all times, a real attack on civilization Christian, this is what contributed to

generating hatred that was very difficult to calm. We were told that the German government would establish several categories among the prisoners and that it would grant freedom to some of them without delay. He was busy resolving this question, Mr. de Thile, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had said to Mr. de Gabriao. He repeated it to me, during my first interview with him, on January 14.

Faithful to the reserve that I had imposed on myself, I had promised myself to take advantage of the opportunity to speak to him about our poor detainees, if he offered it to me, otherwise not to raise this question myself that day. There. M. de Thile quickly got me out of my difficulty. As I expressed to him the hope of seeing good relations consolidated between France and Germany, based on both sides on the desire to maintain peace, he replied that his hopes were of the same nature as mine, and that the German government provided proof of its good dispositions by very actively seeking to give the question of our prisoners a solution in accordance with our wishes. I thanked him.

"I will not conceal from you," I added, "that in France there are few questions which agitate public opinion to the same degree; Once peace had been concluded, it was expected that all prisoners would return without exception, even those who had been sentenced during their captivity for lack of indiscipline, since the cessation of the state of war, the primary cause of these punishments, should logically lead to the disappearance of all its effects; know this well, since you want peace, nothing is more capable of consolidating it than amnesty. There is almost no department, there is no class of society that is not represented among these prisoners; by returning them all together to France, - and I deliberately emphasized this word all - by sending them back to each corner of our country, you will provoke in families, among all

our fellow citizens, a joy and satisfaction more effective than all other means for appeasement and for the guarantee of peace. This would be for yourselves, in my opinion, an act of the best policy."

Mr. de Thile objected to me the severity of the discipline in Germany and its military laws, which, according to him, would not have been applied to our soldiers in all their rigor, far from there; he nevertheless renewed for me the most formal assurances of the good will of his government and of its desire to resolve the question soon and favorably. When he asked me if I had spoken about it to Prince Bismarck, I replied that I had deliberately refrained from doing so, that, the Emperor having reserved the solution for himself, I trusted in his generosity and did not want to tire him with my requests, although I received letters at all hours from my colleagues in the National Assembly or from the parents of prisoners begging me to intercede on their behalf

The impression I brought back from my meeting with the Secretary of State was good, but twice already our hopes had been disappointed, which continued my mistrust. No matter, this cause was close to my heart, I was determined not to lose courage. Whatever the reserve that politics demanded of me, I did not neglect the opportunities to return to the charge. One of them met at a dinner with Baron Nothomb, Belgian minister in Berlin, where Mr. de Thile was, like me. If I report this new conversation, it is because it highlights one of Germany's most sensitive concerns. M. de Thile protested the firm desire of everyone in Berlin to maintain peace with France and to remove anything likely to disturb it; it was as much the wish of Prince Bismarck as that of the King.

"But," he added, "one very regrettable thing is the persistent animation of the French press against us. I read

very regularly and very attentively one of your most justly esteemed collections, the one that undoubtedly exerts the greatest influence on you, the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. However, there is perhaps not a single article on any subject, polemic, history, literature, even science, where we do not bring up, about everything, the most hurtful allusions for the Germans, where we do not encounter the sharpest words against our nation! How then, in the face of such excitement, can we count on the appeasement of public opinion in France?"

The answer was not difficult. "For our part," I said to him, "we must take into account our trials: they are not the justification for the excesses of the press of which you complain, I am willing, they are at least the explanation, and to a certain extent the excuse. Perhaps you generalize your observations too much, anyway. Thus, the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, remarkably written, it is true, does not have the influence on popular opinion that you suppose. Furthermore, if we believe we have reason to complain in Berlin about the French press, we, the vanquished, and as such deserving respect, would we not have, if we wanted, a more incontestable right than yours? to complain about the language of German newspapers towards us? I can cite to you in particular the Yellow Correspondence, whose official ties are known, and which contains in each of its issues, without excluding a single one, the articles most hostile to France, the words most capable of offending our most sensitive feelings. more legitimate. But, believe me, I added, Germans and French, let us not allow ourselves to be influenced by newspaper articles. We both have a high goal, that of firmly establishing a peace equally useful to both nations; let us therefore keep ourselves above the passions which would

make us deviate from it, and accomplish the work which we also have at heart."

M. de Thile strongly approved of this language, and he repeated to me that, on the part of the German government, all hopes and all desires were directed towards the establishment of a lasting peace. "Well," I continued, "for such a valuable interest, give us amnesty!" The Secretary of State had given me too many assurances of the good will of the German government in this regard to answer me negatively; but he affected a certain astonishment at my insistence, claiming that most of our prisoners did not deserve such warm interest, because their conviction would be based, according to him, on serious crimes. "What do you call crimes," I replied? If you want to talk about thefts or assassinations that the French would have committed, we are not interested in that; these do not excite our pity. But it is quite different for those convicted for insubordination or for acts relating to the war."

And I again developed the arguments which I had already presented to him with the aim of establishing that, the war ended and the peace concluded, all traces of the past must disappear. I also insisted on the appeasement that a spontaneous act of clemency would produce in France and on the solid guarantees that it would provide for the maintenance of peace. Mr. de Thile reiterated to me all possible assurances of good will, asked me to have a little more patience and expressed the hope of being able to give me, within eight days, a good answer. Unfortunately, Mr. de Thile's assurances, as everyone knew, were not words of the Gospel! Not that the Secretary of State was not an honorable man and of very good faith; but the Chancer did not consider himself in any way committed by the language of his Secretary of State.

"Also, business in Berlin," one of my colleagues told me, "presents very particular difficulties. Prince Bismarck

avoids, as much as he can, direct relations with ministers and even with ambassadors. Unless these are matters of exceptional gravity, he arranges for diplomatic relations to take place with the Secretary of State, who cannot decide anything and must always refer to the Chancellor. Add to this the distrust conceived and applied in principle with regard to the diplomatic corps, the incredible reserve of all ministers, the timidity of society where we avoid, as much as possible, any conversation on politics, the ill will against France that the most attentive silence cannot entirely conceal, the suspicions that any member of the diplomatic corps who shows you some kindness would excite, to the detriment of their own interests." Let us judge from this the embarrassments with which I was constantly condemned to encounter. A few days later, I finally obtained a royal word more decisive than anything that had been promised to me until then. At the ball given on January 29 by the royal prince, the Emperor came to me. I took this opportunity to thank him for an authorization that he had kindly given to one of my sons, taken prisoner at Mouzon two days before the disastrous battle of Sedan, to reside in a town on the banks of the Rhine that I had designated.

The Emperor, after having answered me a kind sentence, said to me "Concerning prisoners, I hope to be able to give you satisfaction soon for those we have kept in Germany; but we will establish categories. Truly, it was impossible for me to take this step sooner. The decree was prepared, it was on my desk, and I was going to sign it when this double acquittal of Paris and Melun occurred. My soldiers, their families, were frightened; I had to reassure them, and I suspended the signature that I was going to affix." I would have had more than one thing to note in this language; but the moment was not opportune. In short, I was happy with the promise, I thanked the Emperor and I repeated to him what I

had said to M. de Thile, namely that, counting on his generosity, I had so far refrained from talk to him about amnesty, that this measure, so desired in France, was likely to strengthen the guarantees, and that it would be a great joy for me to pass on this news to those interested.

The Emperor asked me to still consider it secret and to confide it only to Mr. Thiers. When, two days later, I reported this conversation to M. de Thile, he was delighted, revealing some astonishment that the Emperor, in the middle of a court celebration, had departed from his usual habits by conversing of a political subject, habits which, he said, caused Mr. Benedetti's despair. What I had refrained from responding to the Emperor, I expressed to M. de Thile: I told him of the mixture of satisfaction and apprehension that I felt, apprehension of the mediocre effect that would produce in France a partial amnesty, and which, consequently, would not meet the goal proposed by both His Majesty and Prince Bismarck; while wiping out the entire past would have an excellent result. I also asked him to tell me how this classification by categories was understood. "In a rather broad way," replied M. de Thile, to reduce your apprehensions: we establish two categories, one made up of soldiers (this is by far the largest), the other of civilians. The first will be released immediately; but the second will still be reserved.

However, the proportion of military personnel is approximately ninety percent, among all detainees." I have already said with what severity the German government treated men who did not belong to the regular troops but who took arms in their hands, therefore in flagrante delicto of plotting against the occupying army. Without denying that the amnesty thus practiced was a little more extensive than I dared hope, I ventured to further plead the cause of the second category of prisoners, composed of fifteen to twenty

peasants and *franc-tireurs* whom I had instructed one of the secretaries of the embassy to visit the fortress of Werden where they gathered.

I affirmed that, among this number, there were some very worthy of interest, Mr. Tharel among others, in whom many important people were interested, Mr. and Mrs. Thiers in the lead. If I was well informed, and I believed I was, we could invoke in their favor a very attenuating circumstance: they were victims of a lie - or an error - from Mr. Gambetta, who would have sent them to Nevers with the assurance that the government was forming a corps of one hundred and fifty thousand men there. It was on their way there that many of them were captured by the Prussians, who began by shooting three or four of them and sent the rest to Germany.

Mr. de Thile promised me to carry out a new, very careful examination of the files in this category, of that of Mr. Tharel in particular; he even wanted to encourage me to send him the information I had on this subject. I did not fail to do so, without much hope, moreover, of obtaining the satisfaction for which we invoked real titles. I would blame myself for not saying that I was not the only one thinking about our prisoners and being interested in their fate.

The Count of Saint-Valier, who later succeeded me in Berlin as ambassador, and who, at the time when I was starting out, was extraordinary commissioner of France to the commander-in-chief of the German army of occupation in Nancy, also took care of them with all the activity of his character, and tried to make them benefit from the friendship, one can even say, to a certain extent, from the influence that his qualities had acquired for him with the general by Manteuffel. He had managed to interest the Commander-in-Chief in our cause, and we had obtained in him a defender who added his recommendations to our requests in a very

effective manner. M. de Manteuffel was not only a good soldier; he had also been a skilled diplomat in his time, and he was, moreover, a very gallant man.

But he had a somewhat suspicious susceptibility which had to be managed in order to remain in his good graces; I almost lost them quite involuntarily. The general having come to spend four or five days in Berlin at the end of January, came to my house, and, as I was not there, he left me his card. The next day, I visited him, without finding him any further; but, due to the negligence of his people, my card was not given to him. I heard no more of the general; but, a few days later, I learned, through a letter from Mr. de Saint-Vallier, that the general had been "pained" that I had not returned his visit, and Mr. de Saint-Vallier, quite attributing this apparent lack of consideration to a misunderstanding, regretted it with all the more reason since M. de Manteuffel had come to see me at the request of the Emperor and Prince Bismarck and that he had the project of concert his action with mine in favor of our poor prisoners. I hastened to respond to Mr. de Saint-Vallier by restating the facts and asking him to express to the Commander-in-Chief my very deep regrets, and for not having seen him, and for having ignored the particular reasons for his visit.

The misunderstanding was quickly cleared up: my card had not been given to the general due to the negligence of the concierge, who, on the orders of his master, looked for it, found it and sent it to him. Mr. de Manteuffel's susceptibility calmed down and even changed, according to Mr. de Saint-Vallier, into a certain confusion which benefited, I suppose, our unfortunate clients. He sent me, in fact, the most obliging assurances of his good will towards the latter and gave me proof of this by being interested in them in every way, by warmly pleading the cause in particular of MM. Thierry, Luzet,

of Bizemont, in whom we, for our part, took a very special interest, promising to join our efforts in favor of those condemned by the war councils of his army, and finally committing myself personally to the Chancellor and the Secretary of State, on whose goodwill I had the right to count, he assured.

The general, who became Marshal de Manteuffel, is dead at the time I write these pages; but it is a duty on my part to do him the justice he deserves and to mention here the gratitude the French owe him. I gladly pay a similar tribute to the Count of Saint-Vallier, who is also dead. In taking care of our prisoners, he was, it is true, only fulfilling his duty, just as I was; but there is more than one way to fulfill one's duty, and appearances are often far from reality, which was not the case with Mr. de Saint-Vallier. As for the outcome of the affair which worried us so much, it was still delayed, despite our well-founded hopes.

During February, I saw General de Tresckow, head of the King's military cabinet, then Prince Bismarck, and M. de Thile again. I received promises, I took away favorable impressions from my conversations, but I saw nothing coming.

Mr. Thiers was a little less surprised than me and thought he knew that the delay in the amnesty; had as its main cause the impulsive, inconsiderate language of our newspapers, about which he expressed himself with great vivacity. Mr. de Rémusat was painfully surprised by this, and urged me to understand the reasons for it, then to obtain some improvements in the fate of civilian prisoners subjected to the rigorous regime of the prisons of Cologne and Werden. Finally, on February 29, I heard the good news. That day, the Emperor signed the pardon of all the soldiers, numbering sixty-two, detained for insubordination. This was, among the prisoners, as I have already said, the most numerous categories, and I

was made to hope that other pardons would soon follow the first. The general of Tresckow had haste and good grace to come and give me this notification, undoubtedly on the part of his august master, that the Chancellor had not seen for five days because he was ill, and he expressed to me the hope that this measure would have a good effect in France. Although I found it insufficient, because it was incomplete, I thought I had to repress this impression within myself again; I only showed him gratitude, promising myself to return to this subject when the opportunity was favorable.

Mr. Thiers and M. de Rémusat thought like me. The President wrote to me: "Thank the King and Prince Bismarck for these consecutive amnesties, less felt than if they were given wholesale, but felt nevertheless and each producing a certain amount of appeasement." — "I hoped," the Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote to me, for his part, "that the first category of the amnesty would go up to a hundred... I hardly need to recommend the rest to you."

How many French people were still detained in Germany? It was almost impossible to know the exact figure. Mr. de Thile had spoken to me of eighty to eighty-five prisoners in all; he was clearly below the truth. M. de Saint-Vauier said one hundred and fifty-five, and, as this figure had been given to him by M. de Manteuffel, with a frankness more soldierly than diplomatic, I am led to believe that he was hardly mistaken. On March 2, I was invited to dinner at the Chancellor's house with all the embassy staff, my colleagues from England, Austria and Russia, Mr. de Thile and the President of the Federal Chancellery, Mr. Delbrück. I was at dinner seated between him and the Count of Arnim. He talked to me a lot and about all kinds of things, except politics, which he always avoids discussing in meetings of this kind. After the meal, the Ambassador of England and I were placed around a

table laden with cigars, and came between us two. He tells us first of all: "Today is the anniversary of peace;

It was on March 2 that the exchange of ratifications of the preliminaries of peace took place signed at Versailles on February 26.

I hope with all my heart that it has started an era of which our children themselves will not see the end." And then, in order to cut the politics short, he began a long monologue on the best method for making wine, on the expressions formerly used in this industry, on the wine trade, etc., all this with an abundance of language and in-depth knowledge of the subject well designed to amaze.

Undeniably, this man has astonishing powers of assimilation; he is capable of understanding and knowing everything. After listening to him for a long time, I got up to leave; then he took my hand, and, squeezing it strongly, he repeated to me: "It is March 2, you know, that is to say the anniversary of the day on which we signed the peace. I wanted, on this occasion, to have you for dinner and to bring all these gentlemen together. Our greatest desire, believe me, is to see it continue without interruption." Although it was possible, without difficulty, to surprise Prince Bismarck more than once in the act of contradiction, that day he was perfectly sincere, I am convinced. I answered him that the desire was the same on our side, and, judging the opportunity to say a few words to him about the amnesty, I began by conveying to him the warm thanks that Mr. Thiers had instructed me to offer him; then I added that the best cement of this peace, the maintenance of which he so earnestly hoped, would be a broad, full, complete amnesty, and that Germany would be the first to reap solid advantages from it.

The Chancellor does not easily modify his theses. He therefore replied to me in almost the same terms as in our last interview, a fortnight before, alleging that, while firmly wanting the continuation of peace, Germany was obliged to take precautions against "French ardor", that its duty was to establish very clearly that certain war processes were not admissible and that repression was essential, in order to produce lasting impressions, and this was the reason why some prisoners were still kept." These are facts of war, he said."

To this I replied to him what I had already repeated more than once on the consequences, both human and logical, of the cessation of the state of war. "You were kind enough to assure me," I added, "that mercy would be given to people other than insubordinate soldiers; won't you let me know their names soon?" "Very soon," replied the prince, "and if it takes too long, come and remind me." I left him, and he returned to his other guests. I saw Mr. de Thile again the next day, I believe, and I recommended to him the prisoners about whom I had spoken with the Chancellor, more particularly among others, and this was not the first time, poor Tharel, against whom We had the most exaggerated prejudices in Berlin, and in whose favor the Count of Arnim had promised me to take all the necessary steps to dissipate these prejudices and obtain his pardon.

The latter was favorably disposed in favor of amnesty, which he considered to be at least an opportune measure; but the Chancellor being said to have a contrary opinion, he believed himself bound to exercise great reserve on this subject. I recognize today that, allowing myself to be too dominated by the thoughts of our prisoners and the sadness of their fate, I lacked prudence and reserve in my claims on their behalf.

I should have remembered these profound words from Mr. de Talleyrand: "Above all, no zeal!" But I was still a novice in diplomacy, I naively imagined that it was enough to plead a good cause with warmth and perseverance and to appeal to the generosity of men to inevitably succeed; I was still unaware of the sometime insurmountable obstacles that human passions and in particular wounded self-esteem raise against truth or right.

Perhaps, I agree, I was not sufficiently aware of the difference in points of view. I learned all this the hard way. I had lulled myself into the illusion, maintained by all the assurances given and reiterated to me, that the Emperor, on the occasion of the anniversary of his birth, March 22, would promulgate a complete amnesty. Nothing appeared as of March 22. I then wrote to Prince Bismarck a letter of a private rather than official nature, in which I expressed my disappointment and the painful impression it caused me. I reminded him of his promises, adding that I had the most complete faith in his word; I again invoked the reasons which militated in favor of an act of clemency, and I recorded, in conclusion, the hope that my expectation would not be disappointed and the anticipated expression of my gratitude for the act of clemency which I dared to ask of His Majesty.

Eight days passed without a response from the Chancellor; concerned about this silence, I went to see Mr. de Thile. I learned from him that his leader had left for the countryside. He had, however, received my letter, because when I got up to go out, the Secretary of State said to me: "I don't think I should hide from you that one or two passages in your letter to the Chancellor seemed a little sharp to him. because they could be interpreted as a reproach for having broken his word."

Certainly, I had not had the slightest intention to hurt, even to prick, Prince Bismarck; it would have been too absurd for me when I appealed to his generosity; but apparently, I had not weighed all my expressions carefully enough, and I did not know to what degree the susceptibility of a man intoxicated by victory. Whatever the case, I naturally defended both my intentions and the appearances which had deceived the Chancellor. I told M. de Thile of the various conversations I had had with him.

These details were unknown to him, and I must have believed that they modified his first impressions, because he urged me to make them known to the President of the Federal Chancellery, Mr. Delbrück, with whom I was invited to henceforth discuss the question of prisoners, and, when I had the opportunity to see the latter, I did not perceive in his words any trace of the sensitivities awakened in Mr. de Thile. In any case, I came to understand that there was nothing more to be done on this point, at least for a certain time.

I firmly believe that my letter had nothing to do with the delay in the definitive solution which only took place in July, after the signing of a first convention for the evacuation of the territory and the payment of our war indemnity; perhaps it served as a pretext, and, if that is so, I was undoubtedly wrong. But I wrote to the minister that in my opinion it was necessary to remain silent from now on. The time to continue our efforts was indeed hardly propitious: the German press was in a period of very particular hostility and bitterness against France; the reorganization of our army was the pretext. I will expand on this point further in connection with the negotiations that I am going to recount for the payment of compensation.

The Berlin Correspondence, a semi-official paper, was particularly and constantly hostile to us. There was hardly an

issue that did not contain insults or rudeness against the National Assembly, against Mr. Thiers, especially against France, against everyone in fact; it was torture for me to read it, and I always had difficulty understanding the interest that the German government had in thus pouring outrage on a country with which he claimed to want to live in peace, - which seemed sincere at the moment, - and which such proceedings must naturally exasperate.

And when I opposed Mr. de Thile's repeated complaints about the stabs and pins in our press, from which he inferred that total amnesty would not disarm anyone in France, when, I said, I opposed him with the hurtful remarks, the constant bitterness of the German press, of the Northern German Gazette, of the Yellow Correspondence, of the National Gazette, etc., all he could say in response was to acknowledge his powerlessness vis-à-vis of newspapers independent of the government, or to somehow disavow the violence of the semi-official publication, which, he said, the entire administration wanted to give a thumbs up to, and which sometimes it even wanted to suppress, etc., etc. Being the honest man that he was, Mr. de Thile was embarrassed in his explanations, because he had nothing good to answer, he felt it himself.

In short, the opinion of Mr. Thiers and M.de Rémusat being in conformity with mine, we agreed that we would suspend for the moment all proceedings in favor of amnesty. More than three months passed before I was told about it again in Berlin. I was going to leave for Schlangenbad, intending to take a few days of rest there, when, on July 7, Mr. Delbrück informed me that he was preparing to submit for the Emperor's signature proposals for pardon in favor of the last prisoners. French; but he asked me to keep it absolutely secret from anyone for four to five days. I kept my word to him

so scrupulously that I did not notify my ministry until this deadline had expired. But, faithful to its system of procrastination, calculated reluctance, and deliberately confusing negotiations, the German government did not decide to put an end to it. Mr. de Rémusat, worried about not having precise confirmation of my first news, asked me, on the 19th, at what point was the question.

I replied to him immediately that I considered the pardons certain, without knowing exactly what day the Emperor would sign them, and that already, through a sure channel, I had had confirmation of the pardon of MM. Tharel and Dehut. The next day, the Gazette de la Croix announced that the German ambassador in Paris had informed the President of the Republic that the Emperor had, on the occasion of the signing of the convention of June 29,

*Convention relating to the payment of war indemnities
which will be discussed later.*

pardoned the last French prisoners held in Germany, but that the news was still premature, and that moreover it would soon be substantiated. Already three prisoners held in Magdeburg had been released; but we were careful not to announce it officially. The same was true of twenty-three prisoners held at Werden and a staff captain. Finally, a few days later, the Emperor signed the amnesty decree. But it was not yet complete: eight or nine civilians and approximately four or five soldiers were not included. Her Majesty having come to Schlangenbad to visit her sister-in-law Princess Charles, was kind enough to express her desire to see me. I eagerly went to her meeting on July 27, and, while thanking her for her act of clemency, I recommended to her benevolence the small number of those who should not feel its effects. The Emperor seemed surprised to learn that his decree had made

reservations: he knew of only one exception relating to a man accused of the crime of poisoning,

Mr. Dutour, who moreover energetically denied the accusation against him, an accusation based solely, I have reason to believe, on the testimony of

and he repeated to me what he and his ministers told me. had already declared on the need to respect public opinion in Germany. On some representations that I allowed myself on this subject, he wanted to promise me to obtain new information and to take into account my recommendations, if I was not mistaken. Indeed, the last prisoners soon received their freedom. So, it was finally a finished affair: it had cost us seven months of effort of all kinds, conversations, notes, prayers, etc. Generosity is not a virtue familiar to all nations.

As for what concerns me, I will say without any bitterness that I received no thanks from any of the prisoners on whose behalf I had taken the most steps; it is possible, moreover, that they were not aware of it. But a minister, Mr. de Rémusat, was kind enough to congratulate me on the result that I had the joy of helping to obtain. A few days before the result was known, another minister, General de Cissey, placed at that time at the head of the war department, wrote to me: "I eagerly take the opportunity to thank you personally for the efforts that you are doing for the deliverance of our compatriots, and in which all sympathies follow you in France." These honorable testimonies have well rewarded me for my troubles.

CHAPTER III

GENERAL STATE OF MINDS IN GERMANY

War indemnity and territorial occupation. — Concerns caused in Germany by the reorganization of the French army. — Conversation between M. de Gontaut and M. de Bleichröder. — Reiterated assurances from the French government of its peaceful intentions. — The political party and the military party in Berlin. — Conversation with the Austrian Ambassador. — The temporary resignation of Mr. Thiers. — Conversation with Marshal de Moltke.

At the same time as I was dealing with the negotiation relating to the release of French prisoners, and long after its completion, another question very particularly called for our concern.

Of all the acts which marked the period of Mr. Thiers' government, the payment of the frightening indemnity imposed by the winner on France is one of those whose impact was the greatest and the most legitimate. As a guarantee of this payment, Germany had reserved the right to occupy part of our territory, and it was not to evacuate it until March 1, 1874 at the earliest, after the full payment of five billion, increased by a considerable sum representing the interests of this capital, plus the maintenance of his troops throughout the duration of the occupation. At the forefront of their most immediate concerns, the National Assembly and Mr. Thiers placed manumission, in the least amount of time possible, of these heavy obligations. Invested with executive power, the President naturally had to take on the most difficult, most delicate part of such a difficult task.

He devoted himself to it with great courage and accomplished the greater part of it, that is to say as long as he retained power, with an ardor, a know-how and an authority that he drew as much from his high intelligence and patriotism

only in the necessary and generous support of the Assembly, as well as in the encouragement of the entire country.

By means of a series of learned and bold operations, Mr. Thiers succeeded not only in raising the capital necessary to pay all of our commitments, but also in making them available to the creditor well before the deadline set by the Treaty. This last point had considerable significance, because the anticipation of payments should result in a more rapid delivery of territorial occupation.

Negotiations were initiated for this purpose and were followed by success. They focused on three main points: payment deadlines, the approach to the liberation of French territory and the last post that German troops would evacuate. When I was about to take up my post in Berlin, a first convention had just been negotiated between France and Germany. Its aim was to settle the payment of the first two billion of the indemnity at the same time as to grant certain commercial advantages demanded by Germany in favor of Alsace-Lorraine, finally to bring forward the evacuation by nine to ten months. of six of our departments out of the twelve-remaining occupied by the winner.

The author alludes to the convention of October 12, 1871 negotiated at Berlin by Mr. Pouyer-Quertier with the Prince of Bismarck. It decided to evacuate, within fifteen days, the departures Departments of Aisne, Aube, Côte-d'Or, Haute-Saône, Jura and Doubs and limited the occupied territory to the six departments of Marne, Haute-Marne, Ardennes, Vosges, Meuse, Meurthe-et-Moselle and the Belfort region. It reduced the occupying army from five hundred thousand men and one hundred and fifty thousand horses to fifty thousand men and eighteen thousand horses. It lowered the costs of maintaining troops to 1 franc. 50

instead of 1 fr. 75 per man per day and 1 fr. 75 instead of 2 fr. 25 per horse.

“The measures are taken, announced Mr. Thiers in his message of December 7, 1871, and payments will be made at the agreed times.” In fact, when I arrived in Berlin, thirteen hundred and fifty million had already been paid, thanks to the loan taken out with such eagerness by French and foreign capitalists. Regardless of the completion of payment of the first two billion, the important question for the future was to ensure the payment of the other three billion and to bring it forward if possible, so as to free France from its debt. that its territory from foreign occupation.

The Treaty of Frankfurt did not break down the second part of the debt into successive payments due on fixed dates; it simply stipulated that the three billion would be payable on March 2, 1874.

The desire of the French government was to obtain total evacuation before total discharge of the debt. Germany imposed the principle of partial, successive and graduated evacuation on payments. At most, she admitted that for the payment of the third billion, and this one only, if France could offer serious financial guarantees, these would replace the guarantees represented by territorial occupation and would bring about the complete evacuation before the actual payment of this last billion.

The occupation presented serious inconveniences for both the Germans and the French; on both sides, we must have been in a hurry to put an end to it, because, from time to time, unfortunate incidents arose between the German

soldiers and the French peasants. The general staff of the occupying army and its leader, General de Manteuffel, concluded, M. de Rémusat wrote to me, that it would be highly desirable to shorten the occupation which was only likely to excite national hatred and sow the seeds of rupture.

Marshal de Moltke expressed himself to me and to others in almost the same terms as Manteuffel. He added with a laugh that material life in France was so pleasant, so sweet, that it spoiled the German soldier. But this necessity was not sufficiently imposed on the German government for it to be able to counterbalance its mistrust against an offensive return on our part, and especially its fear of non- performance of the contracted conditions.

I have already noted, when speaking of the amnesty of our prisoners, how far these fears and distrusting went, and in how many painful, offensive ways they were expressed. We brought extreme sensitivity to everything that concerned the reorganization of our army. No doubt, we pretended not to speak officially about this subject. Thus, Mr. Thiers having approached him one day with the German ambassador, the latter hastened to point out to him that it was not he who took the initiative of the conversation, and he was keen to note that neither his government nor he thought of asking us any questions in this regard.

D'Arnim said the same things to me a few days later. But, in Berlin as in the rest of Germany, the unofficial newspapers themselves were tirelessly concerned with this matter, and I often received visits from important men in politics and business, who came to talk about it. with me.

One of the first interviews took place with a famous banker from Berlin, Mr. de Bleichröder, known to approach Prince Bismarck very closely, without having any official

character, only passing to be the unofficial agent of the Chancellor, at least in some circumstances.

He came to see me on January 18, about two weeks after my arrival; I had met him the day before, at the Minister of Belgium, Mr. Nothomb, the dean, in fact if not in law, of the diplomatic corps. He told me that, his special relationship with the Chancellor allowing him to see him often, perhaps even to say that he had his confidence, to a certain extent, he had the greatest desire to make them serve to the greatest advantage of Germany and France. At Versailles, he had discussed with M. Thiers the war indemnity which he, Bleichröder, would have liked to set at three billion, whereas at first, they thought they should ask for eight! Later, in Berlin, with Mr. Pouyer-Quertier and in passing, he expressed his regret at the refusal of the combination he had proposed to pay the compensation, namely the opening of a large international subscription. throughout Europe at least, a subscription which would have easily yielded, according to him, five billion, by means of which the indemnity would have been paid in one go and French soil immediately cleared of German occupation.

Baron de Rothschild, of Frankfurt, expressed to me, on February 8, the same thoughts and the same regrets. He did not hide his desire to be responsible for the loan intended to cover the repayment of the last three billion, claiming, not without reason, that the position of his house in Europe and his own in particular in Prussia put him in a position to render exceptional services in the negotiation of this great deal. (G.-B.)

“But the opportunity has passed,” he added, “today there is only one thing left to think about, ensuring the payment of the three billion, as soon as the first two have been paid in full, in order to obtain the departure of German troops

as quickly as possible; we'll deal with that a little later; for the moment, I must tell you, Mr. de Bismarck is very happy with you, he is delighted to have you here; but he is not happy Thiers. —And why then, I asked? — It's because Mr. Thiers is increasing the French army too much. Prince Bismarck does not see without concern the reorganization of your army.

He notes that the war budget is about eighty million higher than previous budgets. It is neither credits opened for the creation of equipment, nor expenses applied to the reconstruction of your strongholds which give it humor; he knows, in fact, that your artillery being almost entirely lost, as well as a considerable number of rifles, and your new frontier being open, it is for you an incontestable and uncontested necessity to rebuild your war material and to build strongholds; what worries him is the increase in your executives. He ensures that your new workforce exceeds that of the Empire, which would be contrary to the promises made to himself, at Versailles, by Mr. Thiers. It is the black dot on the horizon, perhaps the only one that concerns Prince Bismarck for the maintenance of peace.”

It was the first communication, somewhat precise and probably accurate, of the discontents of the German government. Finally, this was the explanation for the absolute silence kept on Mr. Thiers, during the presentation of my credentials for the Chancellor. These discontents were unfounded: I noted this in my response, pointing out, moreover, to my interlocutor that our interview was completely private, without any official character.

“The true explanation of the increase in the figure of the military budget,” I told him, “is in the repair of our artillery, our rifles and our strongholds, expenses of which Prince Bismarck recognizes the necessity. As for the increase in our cadre, Mr. Bismarck's apprehensions are based on a false

starting point. The imperial army, according to him, numbered no more than three hundred and twenty thousand men. It is hardly more than this figure, it is true, which presented itself to the enemy at the beginning of the war; but, according to the statements presented in the budget, the normal number should have been much higher; he represents upon entry into campaign, if I'm not mistaken, something like six hundred thousand men. Why were the troops that entered the line much lower than this number? For several reasons, some of which are still quite obscure, others well known on the contrary, for example: the defective organization of our army, the large number of men sent on unlimited leave to relieve the military budget compromised by heavy expenditure previous, etc., etc. Still, the figure of three hundred and twenty thousand combatants was not the normal figure for the strength under the Empire, and, consequently, it should not be taken as a term of comparison with the newly adopted strength. Furthermore, I continued, it is not the reorganization of our army which should exclusively attract the attention of the German government; what is important for him to know are above all the dispositions of the French government and people in relation to the maintenance of peace. Now, I have already said a lot, and I will repeat it as much as anyone wants, neither the President of the Republic nor the National Assembly are thinking of waging war. Mr. Thiers has particularly devoted himself to two tasks, rebuilding France's finances, and giving it an army capable, it is true, of making it respected as befits its situation in Europe, even after our setbacks. but not organized on a war footing. Mr. Thiers completely, sincerely wants peace. I was formally authorized by him to say that he intended to maintain peace, and I said this to the Emperor as well as to Prince Bismarck. These intentions are those of the Assembly and my country. This is

what is important to know, even more than the number of our executives.”

My answer *seemed* to make some impression on M. de Bleichröder. However, at the end of our conversation, he said to me: “Mr. Pouyer-Quertier has, I believe, offered to the Prince of Bismarck to immediately pay the six hundred and fifty million which must not be paid until May 1, provided that the German occupation ceases in two more departments. I don't think he'll accept because of his worry about your growing numbers.”

I limited myself to answering him that I had no knowledge of the proposal of the Minister of Finance. I transmitted this interview to Mr. de Rémusat, asking him to send me some precise figures in the event that the opportunity arises to discuss this same question, either with Prince Bismarck or Marshal Moltke, or with other competent men. I informed him, at the same time, that the press and, in general, public opinion in Germany were very concerned about our military reorganization.

There was so much emphasis on breaking the peace for the spring of next year or for that of 1874, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that I could not help asking Mr. de Bleichröder if it was not us who should be worried about the warlike dispositions of the Germans, and whether we should not see in the language of their newspapers a sort of provocation. M. de Bleichröder warmly protested against such a supposition. But more than one circumstance, during the course of my mission, awakened the same thought in me. A few days after my interview with Mr. de Bleichröder, I received letters from Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat. They both responded to the observations that had been made to me, and they confirmed all the peaceful assurances that I had given to M. de Bleichröder.

"We are only thinking of fulfilling our commitments as soon as possible," wrote Mr. de Rémusat, "and this proves how little our military reorganization projects harbor ulterior motives of war. If we had such ideas, we would only think of getting time for our payments, in order to have more to prepare us. Our constant thought, on the contrary, is to anticipate our deadlines. As for our military plans, they still only exist in the program outlined by the President in his message; no new organizational law was presented. All of Europe is busy rebuilding its cannons and we are doing the same. It is quite simple that we seek to fill the gaps that war has made in our arsenals; we must resume the system of our fortifications, since we have lost Metz and Strasbourg. As for our cadres, if they are more extensive than in the past, it is because, without taking into account the exaggerated number of officers left to us by war promotions, we are pressed by this opinion, general in Europe, that it is necessary to give to all military organization the broad proportions of the Prussian system. Our intention, however, is to keep within a reasonable range and not to go to the last limit of universal service. But, I repeat, none of this has been achieved, or even started."

The language of Mr. Thiers was no less affirmative: "Repeat," he told me in the first letter I received from him, dated January 28, "that we want peace, that we want it resolutely and lastingly; and on occasion, do not fail to say that we give proof of this by paying our debts exactly, and even by wanting to anticipate. If we seek the meaning of this word, let it be understood, without prematurely raising the question, that the month of May has passed, and our six hundred and fifty million paid, we do not intend to wait until 1873 to begin the three billion.

"If we were to poll you on this subject, say that in the month of May, however earlier if we wished, we would listen,

putting evacuation in one part of the scale, and anticipation in the other. We cannot prove in a better way that we want liquidation through peace and not through war.

"If we spoke to you about our armaments, making it clear that, in this respect, we do not recognize anyone's right to question us, you would say, which is the pure truth, that these armaments only have the future and the future alone in sight. We do not want, like the Empire, to be enterprising and weak, but calm and strong. We cannot pretend that we are leaving France disorganized, as the Empire left it to us. Besides, we only do what everyone else does. Aren't we looking everywhere, even in Prussia which is so strong, for what is the best cannon, the best rifle, the best recruitment system? Will it be forbidden for us, alone, to want to give ourselves the best possible organization? And by rejecting compulsory service, am I not giving proof that I do not want to agitate the nation and make its heads turn to the sound of the drum and the trumpet? I want a professional army, solid, wisely limited, as strong against disorder as against the enemies that France could encounter. But even that is expensive and requires me to ask for a lot of money. Besides, avoid this subject and let it be seen that in this respect people would try in vain to attack us; but swear as a man of honor that nothing we do goes beyond what is essential, and has the present in mind. I wouldn't make you lie any more than I would like to lie myself..."

It was difficult to doubt the sincerity of Mr. Thiers using this clear and eloquent language in its precision. In all his following letters, he returned to the same subjects always with this same accent of truth, with this same unshakeable resolution to maintain peace.

I did not fail to reproduce this language in all possible forms; but I have already said, I came up against mistrust, against fears that he was very difficult to appease and destroy.

In this regard, I had fairly frequent discussions with my colleagues in the diplomatic corps; I heard the echo of these mistrusts, but also their expressions of admiration for the energy with which France was getting back on its feet, for the ease with which it honored its commitments.

One of my colleagues admitted to me that there was no country in Europe capable of comparing it with France in this respect.

Another, Lord Odo Russell, told me: "Everyone is astonished at the vigor with which France is recovering, and it would not be surprising if we took some umbrage here. Myself, despite the good opinion I have of your country, I did not expect to see it recover so quickly. This ease with which you covered your first loan and met your commitments, the ease which will certainly govern the conclusion of the second loan, all this is a wonderful thing." Communications were not as easy with the natives. "The Prussian interiors are very walled, both in the highest regions and in the lowest,"

I wrote to Mr. Thiers on February 15. It is tradition, since the great Frederick, to be very distrustful of foreigners: the princes never talk politics, and we hardly see them outside of court receptions, which only last during the carnival. Ministers do not receive; M. de Bismarck is almost invisible; The representatives of the German courts are trembling before the Chancellor, and those of the other courts are not much more fluent in their language than these. It is with such elements that we must see and judge, and you will agree that we are very likely to venture when we are not more acclimatized than I am yet and we want to get involved in carrying judgments." However, the ice had to break little by

little. One of my colleagues, accredited to Berlin as minister for several years, was kind enough to give me, one of the first, useful insights into what was happening there. "The military party," he told me, "will always reproach Bismarck for having left Belfort to France, and it will not have given up the thought of prolonging the occupation a lot, perhaps even of making it definitive.

He knows well that the treaties oppose this, but he is counting on some imprudence on your part, on some delay in the execution of your commitments, probably also on internal troubles, to find a pretext favorable to his designs. Arm yourself with great patience and be very careful. Only in this way can you thwart the plans of the military party; he would not dare put them into execution without a plausible reason, at least a very specious one. In any case, he is willing to occupy your departments as long as possible, and from what I have just told you, you understand the reason."

A little later, one of the members of the Bundesrath,
The Bundesrath is the committee of representatives of the federated governments, without whose consent no law passed by the Reichstag, the assembly of the nation's elected representatives, can be promulgated.
(G.-B.)

said to me: "We would really like to keep Belfort here! It is calculated that the war cost Germany around four billion, and we would be very willing to give you a fifth to keep Belfort." The incontestable gravity of these words was meant to strike us; they carried within themselves a serious lesson: the need for very active vigilance at the same time as moderation and patience measured only by our dignity. We were not unaware, moreover, of the existence in the upper regions of Berlin of two parties: one, considering itself satisfied

for having taken two provinces from France, and especially for itself having imposed a buyout of five billion, part of which has already been affected and which it is important, above all, to bring back in full, even at the cost of the evacuation of our territory, including moreover the usefulness of peace for Germany as well as for the rest of Europe; the other, intoxicated by the successes of the war, struck by the disorganization that followed in France, but fearing our awakening and the rapid progress of our convalescence, eager to make a new effort, if not to crush us completely, from less to break the limbs of "the wounded noblewoman" and render her incapable of any action for a long time. These two parties are called the political party and the war party.

The first would have as its leaders the King himself and Prince Bismarck; the second, the generals and, among them, the most illustrious of all, Count Moltke. Neither of these two parties has until now imposed silence on the other; if the peace party has the King on its side, advised by Bismarck, - and this is the essential thing, - the other has not given up on regaining influence over the sovereign, and circumstances can make this preponderant influence. Moreover, it is certain that the army is on a formidable war footing. This is what I wrote at Versailles.

At the same time, I reported a rather long conversation that I had had, at the beginning of February, with Marshal de Moltke, and which he himself seemed to have sought out. During this interview, he spoke to me about the extreme cost of war in this century, affirming that the compensation of five billion, which we found so exaggerated, hardly exceeded the costs to which Germany had been trained; but above all he focused, with an accent that struck me, on the horrors of war; then he recognized without difficulty with me that it was advantageous for the Prussians themselves to evacuate our

provinces, because it was not guaranteed while the occupation, against a quarrel raised, for whatever reason, by a French peasant or a German corporal, and that peace, thereby, was in perpetual danger.

There is indeed some contradiction between these words of Marshal de Moltke, which would not seem to place him among the supporters of the war, and the language, reported above, of the diplomat. But, still insufficiently oriented, as I said to Mr. de Rémusat, it was not precise and formal judgments that I claimed to send to the French government, it was information that I gave it as very serious indeed.

From this point of view, it is not out of season to report the judgments expressed by the Count of Arnim, German ambassador in Paris, on France and on Mr. Thiers at this same time. The Count of Arnim, good German as he was, knew how to rise above the prejudices and blind passions of his country, which led him, despite the opinions of his leader, to desire the reestablishment of the monarchy in France, in the interest of conservative principles. This independence of judgment, which certainly did not prevent him from fulfilling his duties as German ambassador, sometimes even with a certain harshness and a lot of sensitivity, was frowned upon in Berlin. The Chancellor made him pay dearly; moreover, he sensed a rival in Arnim, it was said. Implacable in his vengeance, he pursued him, until death, with the thoughtless but instinctive cruelty of a wild beast. Here, moreover, is what Count d'Arnim said to me at a dinner with Prince Bismarck. I don't need to say that I just report, but I don't enjoy it.

He returned from Paris painfully impressed by the spirit that reigned there. He feared some "*coups de main*".

Mr. Thiers, according to his conversations with him, would not believe France capable of retaking the monarchy, "and yet, he said, Mr. Thiers is quite naturally inclined towards

men who belong to this opinion, by his tastes, the distinction of his mind, his nature which is not that of an upstart. But Mr. Barthélémy Saint-Hilaire is his evil genius, who compromises and drags him away. Mr. Thiers temporarily resigned on January 19; It's an act of a spoiled child that he would do well not to do again for fear of being taken at his word this time. The manifesto then made by the right of the Assembly had its origin in this incident; she wanted to be ready, if necessary, she was not wrong”.

This is the manifesto written by several members of the moderate right, MM. of Meaux, Depeyre, Cumont and Baragnon. Adopted by their group, it was then signed by the far-right and received, in a letter written by center-right deputies, the approval of this party. It proclaimed the need for France to ensure, one day, its future, and the conviction that the traditional and hereditary monarchy was the government capable of restoring its grandeur and stability. Difficulties arose which prevented its publication. (Cf. Vicomte de Meaux, Souvenirs Politiques, 1871-1877. Paris, 1905, in-8°, p. 135-139.)

A few days after this interview, I had another - with one of my colleagues, the ambassador of Austria-Hungary. Count Karolyi, while being one of the most decided supporters of the understanding between his country and Germany, - which he had clearly proven by agreeing to resume in Berlin the post he had occupied there and which he had to leave in 1866, at the time of the Austro-Prussian war, — “was at the same time a very decided friend of peace; moreover, he was a gentleman in the full force of the term, that is to say, full of honor and very secure relationships. Finally, his fairly intimate relationship with

Bismarck gave, in general, a certain authority to his information.

"In Prussia," he said to me one day, "no one wants war, but in France you talk so often about revenge that he has to be on his guard!"

"You too, my dear count," I replied, "you are falling into an error which is current here, although it is not based on anything serious. Who talks about revenge in France? Of course, we will not be asked to be satisfied with the results of the war, but we need peace, and there are very few French people who do not feel this. The amnesty for our prisoners was about to be signed by the Emperor, when the juries of Melun and Paris acquitted two men who had killed Germans; in response to this verdict, the amnesty was suspended, the disappointment was great among us. We do not know enough in Germany how much this question was close to our hearts, and yet the French newspapers used, on this occasion, the most moderate and reserved language. I cannot predict the future, but to speak of revenge now would be foolish. Whatever regime would now be established in France, not one would want war, except the radicals, perhaps, and I still doubt it. But hearing so often, in Germany, about our desire for revenge, seeing that we are given such a thought gratuitously, almost with affectation, I wonder if it is not a pretext put forward by the Germany itself to attack us. Is it certain that the Count of Arnim and Prince Frederick Charles, who are currently in Italy, were not brought there by the desire to conclude an alliance between it and Germany, with the intention to encourage Italy's desire for Nice and Savoy?"

"Believe nothing of it," replied Count Karolyi. I repeat to you: there is no longer a war party here (the statement was a bit adventurous), there is not a single officer who does not have a horror of war. Why would Germany side with Italy? This

is certainly not to attack you; it would perhaps be in anticipation of the protection that you intend to give to the clerical party, in the event that the Count of Chambord, remounted on the throne, would like to restore to the pope his temporal power; there can be no other reason."

"The Count of Chambord himself, I said, would not go to war; he knows that no one in France wants it, even for such a purpose. For having said in a manifesto that France was the born protector of the Holy See, he frightened even his supporters; he noticed it well. And yet, there was nothing to prove that when he spoke of the protection of the Holy See he was thinking of war. Peace is not only necessary for France, it is for all of Europe."

"Be sure," said Count Karolyi, "that we think the same here, and that we don't want war anywhere. For a long time, Prince Frederick Charles had been planning a trip to Italy; besides, he is not a negotiator. As for d'Arnim, he was supposed to go to take leave of the Holy Father a long time ago: the simultaneity of these two trips is pure chance."

These last assurances were perhaps a little risky. It was not only the reorganization of our army that Germany feared; she was also concerned, rightly, it must be admitted, about the incidents necessarily brought about by the course of affairs in a country where almost everything had to be reconstructed.

We saw, earlier, the reflections of the Count of Arnim on the resignation of Mr. Thiers, and we will also remember the humorous remarks to which it had given rise, on the part of the Prince of Bismarck, to a back first court celebrations. A discussion arose within the National Assembly about the search for new taxes to be established to meet our expenses of all kinds; it had taken a rather sharp turn, as a result of the imperious character of Mr. Thiers, who does not admit that he

was not readily opposed to his views, and also as a result of the inexperience of the Assembly, very generally composed of men animated by great patriotism and excellent intentions, but foreign to the practice of business. Mr. Thiers, irritated by a vote in the Assembly which he strongly opposed, resigned; it was the first time, but it was not to be the last; the Count of Arnim had made a fairly accurate assessment of it. The Assembly, however, understanding the seriousness of a crisis of this kind in the present situation of France, had, the next day, refused, by an agenda voted unanimously, the resignation of the President of the Republic, and, faced with this demonstration, Mr. Thiers had agreed to remain in power. The incident caused a stir in Berlin; people were concerned about the crisis it could bring. I sought to reassure by saying that the debate between the President and the Assembly was purely economic and in no way political, and that, from what had happened, there were only two things to remember: the ardent desire for Assembly, as of the President, to pay the debts of France, - desire proven by the liveliness of the discussion, - and the desire to keep Mr. Thiers in power, a desire clearly demonstrated by the unanimous vote of the Assembly, which strengthened his position far from having shaken it.

In his letter of January 28, 1872, Mr. Thiers wrote to me, regarding this incident, the following lines, which show how he viewed the situation at the time, and make known this mixture of common sense and vanity which characterized him:

“We have had a crisis which should not be frightened, and which you have made a fair assessment of in your telegraphic dispatches. My friends (you know, saint that you are, what this title means), my friends like to say that I spend too much time, that I want to violate the Assembly, and that I had better let my friends beat my ministers than exposing

myself to being beaten myself. These are light and worthless comments from people who want to kill their dog by saying it has rabies. "I assure you that I do not have the rage to exhaust myself and violate the Chamber. But there are things that are essential, of capital interest, and on which I cannot compromise. If I had viewed the financial system with an indifferent eye, I would have been unworthy of the position I hold. Allowing the income tax to be established, which is socialism through taxation, or decimations on salt and land and rentals, would have been a real defection on my part.

So, I took the matter seriously, and very seriously. I had won it, completely won it; but we dragged on, excited gross appetites, and ended up extracting from the Assembly a vote for which it was in despair after having issued it. If I had given in, I was lost, and, in my eyes, a coward. Who will resist this omnipotent assembly if I do not resist it, especially when I am right a thousand times over? It will be a convention, honest if you like, but a convention, and then chaos can ensue. I got in the way, and my resignation given quite frankly led to a sudden but unanimous reflection, which should have been done before instead of afterwards. It cost me to stay, because I am horribly tired, but I surrendered. We will look at this, from now on, before voting so lightly, especially against a man who does not give in to any personal spirit, who makes sacrifices of his way of thinking every day to make common life possible. Moreover, the situation is remarkably consolidated, and crises of this type are not likely to be repeated.

"On the military question, we are very close to reaching agreement and, moreover, to adjourning by mutual agreement. What matters is less the future than the present." In C3 moment, the regimental reorganization, the work material are what matters most, and this is done directly and actively. We can therefore go as we are, without there being any danger at

home. Our voted taxes give abundantly, and the new ones will give no less. So be and show yourself reassured. Believe it, moreover, you and your friends are dealing with a man of good sense, determined, but essentially moderate, and who has no more illusions than intoxication or the whims of power. Farewell, my dear guardian angel, I assure you that if you were as close as you are far, you would not be scandalized by my behavior, and that you would not blow out your candle, because what I do. Your Holiness could see it. Farewell again, and with common efforts, let us try to save our dear country, very spiritual, very brave, but sometimes very distracted. Let us love him, let us look after him, like mothers who passionately love a bad son who distresses them and charms them at the same time."

To continue to show the spirit that reigned in France and Germany, at the time when my mission began, allow me, before entering into the heart of the negotiations, to anticipate a little on the dates and to also report an interview that I had, on April 25 of that same year, 1872, at a meeting with the Minister of the United States, Mr. Bancroft, with Marshal de Moltke. I copy my notes:

The day before yesterday, I spoke at length with Marshal de Moltke. It is a good fortune, too rare in Berlin, to be able to speak with a politician. If this last expression does not apply very exactly to this great man of war, in any case his personality is important enough for any conversation with him to have more than ordinary interest and value.

"Close to each other, in the smoking room, after dinner, we are set to chat. Having asked the marshal if the major maneuvers did not begin in May, he replied that they took place in September and that in any case it would be impossible at the moment, because the regiments were not at

the ready. Far from it, the reserves having all been sent back to their homes in order to rest from the great fatigue of the war; and he gave me the figures of the men belonging to each regiment, all less than about a third of the normal strength. Mr. Thiers had just sent me information on our alleged armaments; the opportunity seemed good to me to make use of it.

"It's the same with us," I told him very simply, "our regiments are very weak at present; the cause is also the sending of a large number of men to their homes and the lack of progress in our reorganization. Thus, in Paris, the infantry regiments, out of a strength of three thousand men, have seven hundred and fifty present in the corps; and the cavalry regiments have barely more than thirty-five men mounted per squadron. — In truth, said the marshal with an air of astonishment? "It's positive," I continued. We made a lot of noise from our armaments; no doubt, we are reorganizing our army, our disasters have made it necessary, but we are operating very slowly. I don't know if you have had time to read Mr. de Chasseloup-Laubat's report, which is very well done.

"I have read it," replied the marshal; he requests compulsory service; do you believe it will be granted?" Mr. de Moltke's question expressed one of the great concerns of the German government at this time. Would France adopt the compulsory service which was to give a great extension to its army, or would it reject it? Germany showed itself to be worried, everyone not daring to contest our right; but it was for her one more opportunity to testify to her susceptibilities; I often saw them break through. I replied to the marshal: "I don't really know; between us, opinions are divided; thus Mr. Thiers is hardly inclined to the system of compulsory service, but it exists in your country, and successively most of the large States of Europe adopt it. We are therefore generally, in France, inclined to apply it. But this is not entirely plausible.

What is done in one country is not applicable everywhere else. I do not,"

In disagree, I do not yet see which way the Assembly will decide. Meanwhile, continued the marshal, with a slightly bitter laugh and with some animation, Mr. Thiers is nicely busy rebuilding your army. Next spring (1873), it will be on formidable footing and very ready to start the war again. "I believe you are mistaken, Mr. Marshal," I replied. No doubt Mr. Thiers wants a respectable army; we need it for two reasons: to be sure, on the one hand, unfortunately, that internal tranquility will not be disturbed, and on the other, to protect us, if necessary, from attacks from outside. — But who is thinking of attacking you? We now have everything we need, so we have neither the need nor the desire to attack you to any degree.

So much the better! but see how little all our figures are worrying. We have a strength of approximately four hundred thousand men; we must deduce the non-values, among others the numerous soldiers convalescing from the consequences of the war. We dismissed the class of 1865, that of 1870 as well; that of 1871 has not yet been called. If it were necessary to put ourselves on a war footing, we could have a total of seven hundred thousand men. Your war footing brings together more than twelve hundred thousand men. See the difference! Our budget is higher than previous budgets, it is true, but the reason is very simple: most of our cannons, a large number of our rifles have fallen into your hands, as have Strasbourg, Metz and other strongholds. We are therefore obliged to rebuild equipment and build fortresses. Moreover, from the figure of ninety-five million representing the increase in the military budget, twenty-five must be deducted dedicated to the maintenance of the gendarmerie and the forces intended to guard Paris.

“That is true,” said the marshal; However, you still have important and very useful places for guarding your borders, such as Verdun, Langres and Belfort; then you carry out major works near Rouen. — It’s true, because our losses of territory have brought Paris too close to the border, and it is necessary to ensure its defense through works such as those of Rouen. In any case, rest assured that we have no bellicose ulterior motives.

There is nothing offensive about our reorganization, far from it We want peace, the Assembly undoubtedly wants it as much as Mr. Thiers. From all points of view, peace is necessary for us. I cannot know what will happen in twenty years, in fifteen years even, and no one knows. “It would be madness to speak otherwise,” interrupted the marshal, “and no one can commit to such a distant future. — You will certainly not be surprised that the French do not have an odor of holiness towards you, but I can assure you that no one is now thinking of going to war; I am, for my part, so convinced of the immense advantages of peace, on the other hand, I am so sure of the intentions of Mr. Thiers, that I would never have accepted the mission that I am fulfilling in Berlin, if I did not had been certain of representing the politics of peace there. - Well! replied Mr. de Moltke, “I am delighted to hear you say that! — We only think of one thing: paying heavy compensation, and, consequently, obtain the liberation of our territory, a measure advantageous to everyone, to you as well as to us. - Oh! I assure you, said the marshal, that we ask for nothing better, that we will be very happy to evacuate your territory as quickly as possible. All our reports, moreover, from the occupied departments affirm a state of calm. — Yes, but who can answer for the extension? It is an incontestable humiliation for a country to be occupied and guarded by foreign troops; The longer the occupation lasts and the heavier

the humiliation becomes, the greater the chances of misunderstanding. A conflict can arise from the slightest argument between a soldier and a peasant. - It is very true."

In the rest of the conversation, I returned to the thought that the vast majority of French people were not asking for war. "Good time," replied Marshal de Moltke, "but your future is not reassuring. Here is Mr. Gambetta who exercised the dictatorship, to whom no one can refuse at least very great energy; he has popularity and he can regain power. Ah! if the merger was done, it would be much more reassuring. But we let ourselves be stopped by this little question of the flag! I do not understand the importance attached to it by the Count of Chambord.

Doesn't the Emperor have his flag on his palace, which is not the German flag? We also changed our flag!" We will note this digression of Marshal de Moltke regarding the flag, a thrilling question in France at that time, and, even more, his favorable opinion on the reestablishment of the monarchy from the point of view of the interests of Germany. The first time I saw the marshal, he expressed himself along the same lines. Bismarck was not so explicit. Between Bismarck and Moltke, it was the latter, obviously, who saw things from a higher perspective than the antagonism present between French and Germans, and best perceived the interests of the whole of Europe. I did not notice, moreover, the last words of the marshal, I only said to him: "I believe that you attach far too much importance to Gambetta and the radicals; — at that time, we had not invented opportunism, Gambetta and radicals, it was all one — no doubt, there are certain homes which belong to them, but, in short, they are not dangerous for the 'order. The country is disgusted with radicals, and if Mr. Thiers were to die, I would not fear seeing France fall into their

hands. As for the merger, I believe that it will not happen at present, but it will happen under the pressure of events."

Here we were interrupted, and the conversation went no further. We will have noticed the concerns of Mr. de Moltke about Gambetta; many others than him shared them. I will have the opportunity to talk about it again. To complete the picture of the situation and the state of mind, either in France or in Germany, when negotiations began relating to the payment of compensation and the evacuation of French territory, one last feature is missing. That the German press said a few words about my arrival in Berlin and the grand reception held by the ambassadors, after having presented their credentials, and where the official world goes, was only natural. But what I should have been spared was the gossip and malicious insinuations.

The Augsburg Gazette, one of the most important newspapers in Germany, was the first to mention my reception. His article had a benevolent label, with a certain dose of malice, and ended with these words; With all this, Mr. de Gontaut will have many the difficulty in making people believe in the loyalty of France."

A few days later, a magazine published in Leipzig under the title *Im neuen Reich* (In the New Empire), reported that at the Radziwill Palace there had been a reception of the heads of the clergy, the feudal lords and the Poles, and that M. de Gontaut-Biron himself attended the council. It was, she added, much less a question of the campaign to be undertaken in the House of Lords, than of a plot against Her Majesty herself. The greatest efforts had been made to achieve the goal, which was nothing less than the overthrow of Bismarck.

The statement was so strange and so ridiculous that the Cologne Gazette, known to be the unofficial organ of the

Chancellor in diplomatic affairs, felt obliged to deny it with a certain vigor. At this time, we were at the beginning of the important and sad Kulturkampf campaign, and, on both sides, spirits had already risen to a fairly high pitch. This was, however, no reason to involve myself in quarrels to which the most elementary conventions and the simplest prudence obviously made me a stranger. The Cologne Gazette declared that such insinuation went beyond the limits of what was permissible and ended one of its articles with these words: "The story of a conspiracy, in which Prince Radziwill and M. de Gontaut allegedly took part, is a fable to which the ambassador's notoriously very reserved attitude removes any serious basis."

Other unofficial newspapers included the denial. Catholic newspapers also protested against the magazine's fantastical story. Nevertheless, the Gazette d'Augsbourg repeated, a little later, the same insinuation, insisting on my intervention in the religious questions which were being debated in Berlin, and affecting a rather great surprise at the fact that barely found the time to intrigue against Prince Bismarck.

A few days later, a fairly complete refutation, even benevolent, was published in a Berlin newspaper, I don't remember which one, perhaps the Gazette de la Croix, and gave me deserved satisfaction. It is no less true that the very fact of having mentioned my name in connection with the internal affairs of the Empire, by making me take any part in it, as soon as I landed in Berlin, was a sign of hostility, at least of malice, and an impropriety.

This was not the only time that the German press wanted to pay attention to me, far from it; she ended up accusing me of collusion with elements of the court hostile to the dominant policy, and she spoke of my change of position.

Did Prince Bismarck have anything to do with this press intervention about me? Not in the beginning, I think; but very probably, he will not have been a stranger to it afterwards; finally, from 1875 and the incident relating to the war,

Allusion to the attack that Germany seems to have planned against us, in the spring of that same year, and which the vigilance of Mr. de Gontaut helped to deflect.

there is no doubt that he himself excited the press against me; it was his way of getting rid of the diplomats who bothered him. The reader can now, I believe, get an exact idea of the arrangements that existed on both sides when we thought about starting the negotiations, all that remains for me is to describe the phases. It is all of your negotiations, at least those for which I was the intermediary or confidant, which will form the subject of the following pages. The subject has had so much importance in my time, that I will be forgiven the details into which I will enter and the quantity of documents which I will reproduce.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONVENTION OF JUNE 29, 1872

The French government, having completed the payment of the first two billion, is prepared to negotiate for the payment of the other three and the liberation of the territory. — The absence of Count d'Arnim, German ambassador, prevents him from starting negotiations. — As this absence continues, he invites M. de Gontaut to inquire about the intentions of Prince Bismarck. — Conversations of M. de Gontaut with the Count of Arnim. — This one only gives vague answers about the

negotiations and highlights the fears caused in Germany by our so-called armaments. — Explanations provided by Mr. Thiers on this point. — Other grievances alleged by the Count of Arnim. — On new instructions from the French government, Mr. de Gontaut requests an interview with Prince Bismarck. — Count Arnim, who returned to Paris, remains vague and reserved. — Prince Bismarck avoids any interview and leaves Berlin. — Concerns from the French government. — The proposals of Mr. Thiers. — Germany's slowness explained by the presumed disagreement between the political party and the military party. — Concerns they cause in Europe. — Negotiations are finally being actively conducted. — Concessions vainly requested by France from Germany. — Conclusion of the convention of June 29. — Interview between M. de Gontaut and the Emperor of Germany. — The tone of the German press.

I had a second visit from Mr. de Bleichröder, on February 8. He had come to talk to me about various combinations proposed by members of the National Assembly or suggested either in Paris or in Berlin; one, among others, considered by him to be very ingenious, and which consisted of ceding to Germany for three thousand billion railway bonds. Mr. de Bleichröder assured that there would be no disadvantage for anyone in this combination; a union of capitalists would buy these bonds and reserve the right to remit the amount, spread over a period of three or four years, to the German government.

While refraining from discussing this combination with Mr. de Bleichröder, I pointed out to him that it required very serious examination, because it could not be an indifferent thing to place in the hands of foreign bankers, depending more

or less on the Prussia, securities in such considerable numbers mortgaged on the French railways.

Naturally Mr. de Bleichröder denied this danger. He also assured me that Prince Bismarck, more satisfied today than a fortnight ago, according to him, with the general situation, was willing to discuss anticipations of payment with the French government and wanted to see the proposals from Paris, Mr. Thiers replied, on February 12, that to talk about this subject, *which we must only talk seriously*, we were waiting for the payment of six hundred and fifty million, payment which was carried out every day, and that when the last million had been paid, then we would speak positively, "because," he added, "we want to pay and in no way want to go to war. Say this as an honest man, speaking in the name of an honest man, knowing what he wants, what he says and what he does.

"Besides, this does not prevent us from listening to Mr. de Bleichröder who is said to have the confidence of Prussia more than anyone else, and from whom we can obtain useful clues capable of enlightening us. On this subject of liberal financial plans, one must listen while showing a willingness to prefer those which would be both practicable and approved by Prussia. I persist in my image: two scales: in one the evacuation of our territory in the other three billion, and as a result, peace. This is what our country and Europe need; so, lend an ear and say that we are waiting for May to speak in turn."

On March 1, Mr. de Bleichröder returned to the charge and the next day I wrote the following to Mr. Thiers: "The Chancellor's desire would be, according to Bleichröder, to receive our proposals, then to settle this timely question with me. He even urges me to touch on this subject with Prince Bismarck, in a simple unofficial conversation, at the first opportunity; but he doubts that the time to settle it has come,

because the two governments would not be - he fears at least - completely in agreement on the consequences of an arrangement, as for the question of evacuation. It would seem, from his language, that here, for the moment, we would only be willing to evacuate the six departments gradually, as the deadlines set by the arrangement to be reached are achieved, while at Versailles we will surely request the complete evacuation of the territory as soon as the arrangement is concluded. He added that all this, moreover, was just a "friendly" conversation between him and me.

I replied that I understood it that way; I contented myself with pointing out to him that the treaty did not say that French territory would be evacuated only when the last three billion were paid, but that with the territorial guarantee consisting of the partial occupation of French territory, Germany would be willing to substitute financial guarantees, if the conditions were deemed sufficient. Mr. de Bleichröder fully agreed with me.

And here is Mr. Thiers' response in part: "I would like to have plenty of time to be able to write to you more often; but your friends who are not as angelic as you, my friends of mine (if I have any), my enemies (and I have no shortage of them), leave me very little leisure and that is at most if I may say so briefly the essential things... You know that the six hundred and fifty million have been paid in full. You must have seen Mr. d'Arnim in Berlin, where he was going to spend, he told me, two or three days. We had a conversation on the big question of the moment and in particular on the liberation of our territory by means of the payment of the promised compensation. I told Mr. d'Arnim that if we had not broached this theme, it was because we were waiting to have finished one operation before undertaking another. Now that this operation is finished, the time will soon come when we can undertake the second.

Mr. de Bismarck will soon hear from us, and if we do not begin immediately, it is because we do not want to engage in the negotiation without having in our hands the means of concluding it. You have to let the trace of the last paper negotiations erase before opening your mouth to say the first word. We will have a leave of five to six weeks in April, and I will take advantage of this obligatory silence in Versailles to speak in Berlin..."

Finally after a fairly extensive digression about a trip that a good number of monarchists had made to Antwerp to greet Mr. Count de Chambord, and about the disadvantages of demonstrations of all kinds, republican or monarchist, including the The result, according to him, would be to agitate the country and, thereby, to diminish the confidence of foreigners in us. Mr. Thiers ended his letter with these lines: "If you see Mr. de Bleichröder again, speak to him in conformity with this letter, that is to say a language decided in the sense of a financial and diplomatic enterprise to acquit ourselves and obtain in exchange the liberation of our soil... "It's up to you", with the same trust and such a warm friendship" Mr. Thiers also avoided discussing at this moment the dissidence which could exist, according to Bleichröder, between the two interpretations of the treaty. He wrote to me again on March 18; his letter contained reiterated assurances of our desire to maintain peace, urged me to affirm it on all occasions, without denying that we had the pretension to remain a great political and financial power, and was silent on the subject of future negotiation.

It was perhaps prolonging the silence too much; it is true that the return of Count d'Arnim was awaited in Paris, who had only left for a few days and did not return.

Always worried for my part about the provisions of Germany, I sometimes wondered if it would be very

advantageous for us to pay promptly and if, the indemnity paid, Germany would remain peaceful. I saw Prince Bismarck preparing himself for great difficulties by his alliance with the liberal party to lead a campaign against the Catholics - a campaign, let us observe in passing, as much directed against France as in favor of the Catholics. unity of Germany - and perhaps, with the bold spirit which distinguishes it, suddenly deciding, to distract from internal difficulties, to restart the war, at least first arousing ourselves, of good from the sides, serious embarrassments, seeking to isolate us more and more, and then seizing the moment to attack us. Now, at that time, would our army be reorganized enough, strong enough, well enough commanded to support a new struggle? Wouldn't we be even more isolated than in 1870? On the other hand, would France, freed very quickly from its debt, be wise enough to think only of its internal affairs, to apply itself exclusively to the restoration of its finances, its army, and all that? who could make it regain its former prosperity? I concluded that it would be better to stagger our payments until May 1, 1874, even if it meant delaying, alas! the liberation of our territory, than to acquire our freedom in a very short time. I had prepared a letter to Mr. Thiers developing these ideas; I have the draft, did I send it or not? This is what I can't find in my notes. (G.-B.) — Sent or not, this letter does not appear in the collection of correspondence: Occupation and liberation of the territory.

Finally, I received two letters from Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat both dated April 11, indicating the desire to begin negotiations. It was first necessary to ensure the intentions of

the Berlin cabinet. Mr. Thiers explained to me why he had delayed until now, and why the time seemed ripe to act. To be too hasty, according to him, was to risk making the opposing contractors all the less hasty; apart from this consideration, the financial market required rest. So he had said to the Count of Arnim leaving for Rome: "On your return!" But the absence of the German ambassador, instead of lasting eight days, as he had announced, had continued for a month, and the market, far from wanting rest as Mr. Thiers had believed, seemed to require action today, all matters being in fact suspended from the operation of the future loan. Without wanting to rush things, we should not let them languish either.

Mr. Thiers did not want me to take the question in hand: this did not seem to suit, he thought, Mr. de Bismarck, who had always made him say that the thing had to happen between the two of them, through an intermediary whom he would indicate, - this was an assertion contrary to the statements of Bleichröder, who was very well informed on this subject; — but he wanted, without presenting myself as responsible for initiating the negotiations, that I initiate a conversation, either with M. d'Arnim or with Prince Bismarck himself. I had to ask them what we should think of people who showed up in quite large numbers at Versailles and said they were mandated by the Chancellor to talk about the finances of the affair; I must say, at the same time, that our funds would suffer from the prospect of a loan, that if we wanted to operate soon, we must not delay in processing, that if, on the contrary, we wanted to delay, we would have to know, that in this case, it would be necessary to delay a lot, so that the pressure of an upcoming loan would cease to weigh on business. Germany was so interested in us having the means of paying, that it should not be insensitive to all these considerations. Mr. Thiers was very keen to obtain this information. "Indeed," he

said. we seemed to be in a hurry, and suddenly we no longer seem to be. I am not at all surprised by this, because I attribute the silence kept at this moment, on this subject, to preoccupation with Catholic affairs; but it is good to know it for the conduct to follow and the attitude to take. This affair is so serious for France, it touches so much on everything, that being informed about it is of supreme importance.”

On April 14 and 15, new letters from Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat. The previous ones required me to only test the waters and obtain information deemed necessary, moreover, to begin the big affair whose time seemed to have arrived. These were more precise and more pressing. We absolutely wanted to be fixed on the provisions of the German government, and, if they were consistent with the intentions of the French government, to determine, without further delay, all the points of the negotiation. At Versailles, we had very recent reasons to believe that an openness on our part would be well received. “This is, at least,” Mr. de Rémusat wrote to me confidentially, “the formal opinion of General de Manteuffel, who urges us to make our proposals, and who says he is assured of the dispositions of the King and Mr. de Bismarck.”

On the other hand, the well-established state of the financial market required us, more imperiously than we would have thought at first, either to delay or not to waste time. “I had recommended to you,” M. Thiers wrote to me, “to proceed indirectly with M. d’Arnim or M. de Bismarck, so as not to appear to be opening a negotiation yourself. Circumstances have changed and today we need to be clear on this serious subject...”

“Russia has just taken out a loan; other borrowers, States or companies, may want to draw from the pool of capital which is, today, a vast reservoir into which all savings flow and from which all wealth seeking a good investment

emerges. But we absolutely must decide to follow a well-calculated course of action, above all consistent, and on which politics and finance are in agreement. Now, we cannot parley with financial people without knowing what Mr. de Bismarck wants, and speak to Mr. de Bismarck without knowing what the financiers can do. However, we must break this vicious circle, and it is through Mr. Bismarck that we must obviously begin to break it, since it is up to him to say whether he wants or does not want to address this subject.

“You must therefore simply address him through Mr. Delbrück, telling the latter that you wish to see the Chancellor to finally speak to him about this negotiation that everyone is talking about, except us, Prussia and France, that is- i.e. the two most interested parties.”

The reason for the silence kept by Mr. Thiers was the expectation of the Count of Arnim, who had always been represented to him as the man with whom he had to negotiate, and who would not be ready, it was assured, to return.

Since then, it had reached the ears of Mr. Thiers, who recommended to me the most absolute discretion regarding this confidence, that Mr. d'Arnim would perhaps not be the intermediary who would best suit Mr. de Bismarck. Mr. Thiers urged me to approach the Chancellor simply and frankly and to tell him, to begin with, that we wanted two things: to acquit ourselves and to put an end to the foreign occupation, — which obviously proved our ardent desire to peace, - then to explain to him the reasons for our reserve until today, finally to express to him our desire to be fixed on his intentions.

“If Mr. de Bismarck is ready to deal, added Mr. Thiers, you will ask him to tell you frankly which intermediary is more acceptable to him and you would add that this *persona grata* will be ours. However, we would like this negotiation to be conducted near us, the greatest difficulties being here, it goes

without saying that the negotiation, conducted here, would be, point by point, among the capitalists whose assistance must be had. He points, communicated to Mr. Bismarck and at every moment subject to his will. ... But we are ready to deal wherever and by whomever we wish."

Such were the instructions, perhaps a little minute, from Mr. Thiers, perhaps a little too agitated too. Mr. de Rémusat reproduced them almost literally and insisted on the essential discretion to be maintained in this negotiation. "Perhaps," he added, "you could speak to the King about it; However, I urge you, in this whole affair, to act only in concert with Mr. Bismarck and, so to speak, under his direction. You feel, moreover, that nothing should leak out around you about the very confidential mission that the President is giving you at this moment."

These gentlemen were completely mistaken about the ease of seeing the King and even Prince Bismarck; we will find proof of this in the rest of the story. I had to worry, in any case, about the means of conveying our intentions to them.

The conduct of Mr. de Gontaut in this negotiation was very strongly criticized. He was accused of slowness, inexperience and even clumsiness. In his work on the liberation of the territory, Mr. Doniol formulated these reproaches with an insistence and a fearlessness of affirmation which do not appear to us to be based on irrefutable arguments. It also seems that these arguments are borrowed, in large part, from some letters written by Mr. de Saint-Vallier to Mr. Thiers and published in the two volumes of correspondence entitled: Occupation and liberation of the territory. Mr. de Saint-Vallier, echoing General de Manteuffel here, complained that M. de Gontaut had not promptly approached the Prince Bismarck himself to discuss

with him the question of advance payments. He also finds it unfortunate that Mr. de Gontaut thought it necessary to discuss the subject with the Count of Arnim, that is to say with the man who should have been most carefully kept away from these discussions. We will not examine the question of whether, in fact, it would have been better to bring this matter to Prince Bismarck's attention promptly and clearly. The security of opinion of people who take pleasure in providing, after the fact, the solution to these delicate problems of diplomacy, inspires us with respectful consideration. But the awareness that we miss most of the elements of the problem imposes on us, despite ourselves, a timid conduct that M. de Gontaut had to take undoubtedly depended on many things which, at a distance, escape us; it was above all a matter of tact. Furthermore, his story proves time and time again that Prince Bismarck was only approachable during his times. We will therefore confine ourselves to saying that Mr. de Gontaut, in all this negotiation, received instructions from the French government, and that even admitting that this affair was at the beginning carried out too slowly and too timidly, the fault was not in not to him, or, at least, not to him alone. In a letter dated April 22 addressed to Mr. Thiers, Count de SaintVallier speaks of an instruction that the President would have sent to Mr. de Gontaut, and which the latter "unfortunately delayed in carrying out. " However, it was only on April 14 that Mr. Thiers, believing "that we must finally make a decision", gave the formal order to Mr. de Gontaut to go see Prince Bismarck and openly discuss the issue with him. We saw that in the instructions of April 11, it was still only a matter of

testing the waters, either with Prince Bismarck himself or with Count Arnim. It was on this last course that M. de Gontaut stopped, before having received the instructions of April 14, which excluded the Count of Arnim. However, if it is true that Prince Bismarck wanted to receive promptly and directly the proposals from the French government, it is a fact that Mr. de Manteuffel, warned the President that the time had come to negotiate: "The general believes the moment is favorable to negotiate, if we are ready to do so," he wrote on March 7. On March 18, he renewed his warning: M. de Manteuffel "insists above all on the fact that the moment is right, that he knows it from a good source, that he knows that the prince of Bismarck would very much like this negotiation to open before the opening of the Reichstag, which will take place in the second fortnight. of April." It is clear that in speaking of the instruction which M. de Gontaut "unfortunately delayed in carrying out", the Count of Saint-Vallier believed that it had been sent to the ambassador for some time. We see, on the contrary, that Mr. Thiers was in no hurry to follow the advice that General de Manteuffel had him transmit. We will therefore conclude that, if this slowness was a fault - a question which we do not claim to resolve - it would be right not to incriminate Mr. de Gontaut alone. Depending on one's opinion of the manner in which this negotiation was conducted, it would be appropriate to associate Mr. Thiers with the ambassador in praise or blame. We have seen, moreover, that M. de Gontaut was in no way in favor of waiting so long before openly beginning negotiations. No doubt, left to himself, he would have acted with more decision. Finally, knowing

that Mr. Thiers only employed him in this matter as a scout and did not intend to let him take charge of the negotiation, Mr. de Gontaut naturally believed himself obliged to exercise great reserve. As for having addressed the Count of Arnim to find out the intentions of the German government, it may have been a false maneuver and that the German ambassador sought, through interested opinions, to delay the negotiation. But, if he was playing a double game, Mr. de Gontaut is just as excusable as Mr. Thiers for not having noticed it right away. The President of the Republic, who had had more frequent and more sustained contact with the Count of Arnim than Mr. de Gontaut, saw no reason to doubt his sincerity. He even urged our ambassador to rely on the advice of the Count of Arnim, whom he considered "benevolent." Moreover, it was on this same advice, transmitted by Mr. de Gontaut, that modifying once again, as we will see, his instructions, he invited the latter not to rush anything.

The count d'Arnim had come to see me to accept an invitation to dinner that I had sent him and to tell me that he would not leave Berlin before the 17th at the earliest.

This visit of the Count of Arnim and the conversation he had with M. de Gontaut were by prior to the arrival of the letters of April 14 and 15, sent by Mr. Thiers and M. de Rémusat and which have just been discussed.

I brought the conversation to the negotiations relating to the payment of the three billion, taking care not to leave anything in my words that could have given them an official appearance, as a curious person rather than a negotiator. I

asked him if he was thinking, once he arrived in Paris, of starting talks with Mr. Thiers on the anticipation of payment of compensation of war, or if Mr. Bismarck's intention was to postpone this negotiation. The question was suggested to me by reading the German newspapers which revealed public concerns in this area and perhaps the impressions of the government itself. To demonstrate the advisability of taking a side, I used the arguments provided to me by the letters of Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat.

"Mr. Bismarck is so busy," replied Count d'Arnim, "that I have not yet been able to discuss this matter with him in depth. But our very positive disposition is to listen to the serious proposals that Mr. Thiers will have to make to us and to immediately process my return to Paris. Besides, it is not as simple as you seem to believe to make precise resolutions in this regard. I have to see the King, and, between you and me, my impression is that he is not without concern about the reorganization of your army. You have more soldiers than us, and your military budget amounts to the enormous sum of four hundred and sixty-four million, apart from the liquidation budget which is also very high, but which relates, it is true, to expenses necessitated by the loss of your artillery and the defense of your new borders."

I was not surprised by this allegation from Mr. d'Arnim. that he presented to me as a reason for hesitation to begin negotiations; For the past fortnight, more or less sincere apprehensions about the reorganization of the French army have increased in intensity in public opinion and also seemed to reach even statesmen. No member of the government had officially spoken to me about it, knowing well that I could not accept the conversation on this ground; but the confidants of the Chancellor and - what is more valuable, perhaps - important members of the Bundesrath had expressed to me

their doubts about the usefulness of giving us the luxury of such a considerable army, and alleged the suspicions that this army could inspire in other powers. Mr. d'Arnim approached the same theme and in the same tone as me, removing from his language anything that could resemble concern or a request for explanation, giving it only the tone of a discussion. intimate intended to make me understand Germany's hesitation to enter into negotiations.

In such circumstances, I had no reason to decline the interview. On the contrary, whether Mr. d'Arnim was only instructed by Mr. de Bismarck to inform me of his concerns and to sound me out, or whether he expressed his personal impressions to me, I found an opportunity to explain myself. with him and I took advantage of it. I found it even more advantageous than in an interview with the Chancellor, because of the somewhat hidden role that Mr. Thiers, as we saw above, intended to give me in the negotiations. I therefore represented to him that the concerns he expressed to me had no basis, and I gave him peremptory proof, which I will not repeat here, because we have already read them in the account of my interview with the marshal of Moltke and in the letters of Mr. Thiers.

"Nothing can justify," I said to him in closing, "the accusation which supposes that we have warlike ulterior motives, and common sense itself indicates that if we pay the compensation more than regularly and if we ask Mr. of Bismarck to agree with him to pay the rest, it is because apparently we are not thinking of breaking the peace; if we thought about going to war, we wouldn't pay!"

M. d'Arnim seemed to listen to these explanations like a man who does not need to be convinced, but who would like them to calm other concerns than his own; he protested the

confidence that Mr. Thiers and his government, but added that it was difficult to share this confidence in his own government.

I communicated the impressions and declarations of Count d'Arnim to M. Thiers and M. de Rémusat. Here is a passage from my letter to the President: "The interview had an intimate and, so to speak, friendly character; nevertheless, some people tell me that, unhappy at not being sought after in Paris by French society, Mr. d'Arnim makes harsh and unfriendly remarks about our country, to which he would be in no hurry to return. What is certain, and I have just learned it from two different sources, is that he is once again postponing his departure. This is not a good sign for the negotiations that he had, so to speak, promised you to begin after a short absence. This prolonged stay in Rome, this delayed departure from Berlin, these concerns about our armaments, peddled even in the diplomatic corps, the repeated violence of the German and Italian newspapers against France and against you in particular, all this must seriously call for your attention. Is this a calculation to influence the negotiations? It is quite possible, because I persist in believing that Mr. Bismarck does not want war. What concerns me most is the concern of the Emperor, who is more sincere and less hostile, basically, than the Chancellor. Finally, from Versailles, you will perhaps distinguish better than we do here the value of all these symptoms."

To my two letters, Mr. Thiers responded immediately, on April 18, with the following, which I believe I must reproduce in full, despite the repetition of arguments already used in my conversations and already known to the reader, because that she summarizes, in clear, lively, eloquent language and striking sincerity, everything there was to say on this subject:

"My dear Monsieur de Gontaut,

We have received, Mr. de Rémusat and me, your private letter, the report of your conversation with Mr. d'Arnim, and finally your various telegrams, and we found pleasure and profit there.

This morning, I sent you a telegram to authorize you to proceed when and how you deem it appropriate to do so. You are a man of tact, you are on the scene, you are surrounded by all possible information, you are therefore perfectly in a position to choose the right moment to speak and act. We are not a day, a week, or even a month away, although a delay of one month could lead to delay of several months. But it is important to us that it is clear that we are ready to keep more than our commitments. We paid the first two billion a few months in advance, and we are ready to pay the last three two years earlier than the agreed term. No doubt, the desire to liberate our territory plays a large part in this eagerness, but the desire to prove our unshakeable resolution to maintain peace plays no less part. Apparently, if we were thinking about war, we would not be simple enough, having two years to pay, to give our money straight away, that is to say, enough to pay off two or three campaigns to those who should be our enemies so soon. If we do not understand this, we must give up trying to make ourselves intelligible.

We want peace, we must want it for our internal security as much as for our external security. To do the opposite would be madness on our part. At my age, I cannot desire any other glory, if I can aspire to have any, then that of pacifying my country, of providing it with a few years of rest, of calm, of well-being, and of providing it with, in a word, not noise, but happiness. It is happiness alone that will restore his strength and restore his morale. I defeated demagoguery with cannon; I will only overcome intellectual and moral anarchy through a long period of appeasement. I understand this, and

if I did not, I would not have signed the peace that I signed, with a torn heart, but with an uplifted soul because I knew that there was nothing else to do, " As for our so-called armaments, it is not speaking the French language to qualify them by this name. We build armaments when we increase our forces, and when we increase them with a view to an upcoming action. But I am busy reconstituting the military force of France, according to views that I have been expounding for forty years and which I have always called France's peace footing. With our method we will have barely four hundred thousand effective men; we are far from having them today, and it is this figure that we have never ceased to have, until the time when, to pay for the expedition to Mexico, we abandoned all our staff. Now, in our system, which is not that of the Prussians, it is at most enough to have seven hundred thousand men on war foot, assuming a completely extraordinary armament. What would people say if, consenting to the system of compulsory service, I sought, like Prussia, Austria, Russia, to set up fabulous forces of twelve hundred to fifteen hundred thousand men and more? I want an army, small in number, but solid, disciplined and as capable of maintaining order at home as our independence abroad.

We are talking about our greatly increased expenses. No doubt they are, but the gendarmerie and the police forces of Paris take from this increase of ninety-five million at least twenty-five million. The suppressed Imperial Guard had to be replaced by line regiments, and, all things considered, we will only have the strength prior to the Mexican War. If we deduct the men on convalescence leave (these are the wounded who remained behind the bodies while awaiting their pension), we only have the number of years of peace for the Empire.

Apparently, we will not ask us to renounce our position in the world, and even our independence. Never was a word

said to me that had such a meaning during the painful peace negotiations, nor in the negotiations of any kind that followed. Certainly, there was doubt that we could keep our commitments, pay the exorbitant sum of five billion; we doubted it, well, we can, we want to pay it, we will pay it; and people would pick quarrels with us because we want to reconstitute our country, morally, materially, politically! Never before has anyone tried it, never before has such an insinuation been attempted, and I certainly hope that it will not be attempted today.

Consider that almost all of our rifle armament has been destroyed or taken, that our entire field artillery needs to be rebuilt, that we have Strasbourg and Metz to replace, and that for all this we need money and time. Alas! a lot of time, a lot more than I have to live.

Certainly no one has accounts of this kind to ask us; but as every good neighbor has the right to count on a good neighbor and to open up frankly to him about what may worry him, you can, if you are brought frankly, loyally to this area, follow those who would like to take you there and speak to them openly. Send me here whoever you want, and I will provide all the information you could wish for. Besides, M. d'Arnim hears everything. Let him come and I will give him every satisfaction imaginable, and that with the states in hand.

So, to finish, I will tell you that we leave you free to choose the *mollia fandi tempora*, provided that we know that we are ready to deal on the day we want and that consequently it is not up to us. We will have to blame ourselves if, letting the time pass to deal with, the financial season in a word, we were put back six months. We also know that by leaving annoying rumors in circulation, raising unfounded mistrust, we further reduce our means of paying.

“Farewell, my dear Monsieur de Gontaut, believe in all my friendship.”

Mr. Thiers was right: if one did not understand this, one would have to give up trying to make oneself intelligible. In truth, Mr. Thiers, who was not a supporter of compulsory service, had some illusions about the ease of bringing the Assembly to his views; but his argument on the goal he proposed in reconstituting the military power of France was no less forceful and was no less likely to reassure Germany, whatever the system adopted. It was difficult, in fact, to present with more sincerity, with more striking clarity, the intentions of France, to demonstrate that more good will to come to an understanding with our conquerors. Nevertheless, we will see that the question of compulsory service in France was taken up more than once by the Germans as an argument against our intentions and our peaceful assurances, something quite singular on the part of people whose military institutions were based on this system; but force cares very little about logic. It must be admitted, moreover, that Mr. Thiers had gone a little too far on this subject, and that the opposition between his assertions and the views of the Assembly served as a fairly plausible pretext for the suspicions of the German government, regarding of our military reorganization.

I replied on April 20 to Mr. Thiers. Thanking him for the confidence he showed in me, I expressed the hope, nothing but the hope, of finally having, in a not-too-distant time, an interview with Prince Bismarck. At the same time, I announced to him the sign of a certain relaxation, and this was not without price at the time when an article in an English newspaper had just spread quite strong concern in Europe, on the subject of the relations between France and Germany. According to the *Daily Telegraph*,

*Article from the Daily Telegraph, dated London April 18
and reported by Belgian Independence. (G.-B.)*

Count d'Arnim brought to Paris an ultimatum motivated by the reorganization of the army and a bellicose speech from Mr. Thiers; Prince Bismarck demanded a reduction in our armaments and a great reduction in our military forces, and if his demands were refused, the German army would be mobilized, occupy the cities and territories deemed necessary, either to guarantee the payment of the compensation, or to protect against any attack from France.

The exaggeration of this news was so obvious that the emotion it aroused did not last long. In France, the bulk of the public showed little credulity, and the situation was really not altered. The German newspapers, moreover, included, from the 19th, a communication from the government formally denying all rumors of misunderstanding with France. This note, accompanied by many other clues in the same direction, dissipated whatever concern might arise from after all improbable noises.

But nothing of this sort was indifferent. Mr. de Rémusat, with great political sense, could not help but infer from everything that was happening that the negotiation we wanted to begin would be less easy than we would have thought we had the right to hope. and that total evacuation would be delayed. According to him, the postponement of the discussion, in the Assembly, of the military law was very desirable, because, at the point where we were, it was necessary, more than ever, to watch out for the prejudices which could give rise to the defiant minds which wanted, with all their might, to attribute warlike intentions to us. I was of his opinion, knowing well the exaggerated concerns that the adoption of compulsory service would raise in Germany; but I

do not I did not hide the susceptibilities of the country, inclined to see, in the distance from this discussion, a concession to Germany humiliating for it. It was a matter of measurement that it was up to the government to resolve.

However, Count d'Arnim did not leave for Paris, and this renewed delay greatly agitated the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. They began to wonder whether the prolonged absence of the German ambassador was a threat. It was not precisely that, in my opinion; but there was probably an intention to make us understand the persistent suspicions which our efforts to rebuild an army inspired in Germany. The Count of Arnim, moreover, did not conceal it from me, in the visits he still made to me, while declaring that these concerns were those of the public, and not his own. There was yet another reason which he did not say, but which I glimpsed: it was the desire to be responsible exclusively for the negotiation with Mr. Thiers, and he did not decide to leave, in my opinion, only when he believed he had obtained assurance from Prince Bismarck.

In his last conversations with me, Mr. d'Arnim revealed to me a new susceptibility of his government. "General Le Flô," he told me, "has asked Russia to take an interest in the negotiation relating to the liberation of your territory and to commit us to negotiations. What's the point? This is a matter between you and us alone, in which there is no need to involve third parties. What happened, anyway? You are counting on Russia's friendship, and perhaps you are deceiving yourself. She was the one who told us about your proposal and told us she received it coldly! I have to tell you that this process has gone a bit off track here. — I have no knowledge of this fact, I replied, I do not dispute it, but I know nothing about it. It would, however, seem more explainable to me than to you. During the war, and after the visit of M. Thiers in Petersburg, the

Emperor Alexander, who had welcomed him perfectly, wrote to your sovereign, as you are certainly aware, to urge him to listen to the peace proposals. Is it surprising that, remembering his good intentions, the President simply asked Russia to recommend that you come to an understanding with him? When two people have a dispute, is it not natural for one to turn to a mutual friend, begging him to work to bring about a settlement and put an end to the dispute? Such an approach is proof of a desire for conciliation, and nothing else. It is probably in this sense that Mr. Thiers will have made the Emperor of Russia speak. "It's possible," said M. d'Arnim, "but we don't need encouragement. We will resolve the matter between us without the intervention of a third party. Don't count too much on Russia."

There was no ulterior motive in this language of the ambassador, I am convinced; but was it permissible to say the same of its leaders? Germany assured that affairs would be settled very well between us without an intermediary, and, in 1875, it intended to settle them by war! We were therefore not wrong to interest Russia in maintaining peace. Moreover, Mr. de Rémusat, to whom I related Mr. d'Arnim's reproach, replied to me that General Le Flô had simply asked the Emperor Alexander, in his correspondence from uncle to nephew, for some mark of benevolence for France and that he would never return there again.

Finally, Count d'Arnim repeated to me that the affairs of France had absolutely nothing to do with the postponement of his departure for Paris, that, any interview with Prince Bismarck being difficult, he had not been able, as soon as 'he would have liked to talk with him about his trip to Italy, that he had barely had time yet to talk to him about things in France, finally that he had personal affairs to complete. In his last visit, on the 25th, he insisted on these same reasons for postponing

his departure, expressed the hope that I had not let my government ignore them and finally announced to me that he was leaving the day after tomorrow.

The Count of Arnim, in our conversations, again touched on the question of the press; he showed himself offended by an article in *Le Bien public*, the official newspaper of Mr. Thiers, according to him, which he found insulting and aggressive against his country. I had a good time when the Germans put me on the agenda of our press, because I could respond to their sensitivities by pointing out the excesses of their newspapers, much more aggressive, much more insulting even than ours. Those which stood out in this genre were the obviously unofficial newspapers: *the Northern German Gazette*, *the Provincial Correspondence*, *the Fauna Correspondence*, and there was nothing to reply to. As for Mr. Thiers' relationship with the public good, I did not know the exact nature; but I affirmed that the *Official Journal* was the only organ where it was necessary to seek the thoughts of the President of the Republic. I felt obliged, moreover, to warn the President to be on guard against newspaper reporters who, taking advantage of a certain ease of access to the offices, made him speak indiscriminately and compromised him: This is how a reporter from the newspaper *La Patrie* claimed to have had a conversation with him which had been very noticed and much commented on in Berlin, and which had been the starting point of the recent upsurge in opinion against our armaments. Mr. de Rémusat, to whom I complained one day about the indiscretions of the press, replied that he guaranteed the discretion of his ministry, but that the Presidency did not inspire him at all with the same confidence.

In these conversations with Mr. d'Arnim where we did not only discuss negotiations between our two governments, he spoke to me several times about the

reconciliation and the understanding between the two branches of the House of Bourbon, referred to in public language as fusion. Like Marshal de Moltke, he was worried that it had not been accomplished, regretting that it had not been accomplished in Bordeaux itself, and he believed he knew that this was the opinion of the Duke of Aumale, which I doubt a little.

“Pope Pius IX, whom I have just seen,” added d’Arnim, “wants the merger, and he asked me if we would see any obstacles to it. “I don’t think so,” I replied. It is not only in Prussia and Russia, as you believe, that Mr. Count de Chambord is blamed for being so attached to the white flag, it is the same in Italy. The Pope thinks, in this regard, like you, and Cardinal Antonelli said to me: “What! it is for a piece of fabric that the fusion “fails!”

Why doesn't the Count of Chambord do like our king who kept for himself, for his palace, the flag of the Hohenzollerns, while the German flag is that of the State and the army?” A few months later, the Count of Arnim was even more explicit on this subject. I transcribe here, from my notes, a conversation that I had with him, on October 24 of that same year, 1872, and which contains truly prophetic views. He kindly came to see me before his departure for Paris, which he has to travel to this evening. He is sorry in his predictions about France. He spoke to me very freely, although sometimes taking some oratorical precautions, as if he was afraid of an indiscretion in relation to Mr. Thiers. The last elections, with strong radical majorities, frighten him for us: “Mr. Thiers is throwing himself too far to the left. Believing himself sure of the right, he caresses the left; The conservative

republic is a chimera! It will slide lower. France is not made for the republic. Would Mr. Thiers, thinking about it, primarily have in mind the continuation of his power? Certainly, Mr. Thiers deserves great praise for what he has done. He is a very honest man and very frank at the same time. He governs very well. But after him what will happen? It would be happy if he lived for several more years, and yet, if you have the conservative republic for a few years, the country will get used to the republican form, and, after Mr. Thiers, you will be forced to endure a republic which will be radical, then socialist and which will take you far!"

M. d'Arnim agreed, moreover, that if by opinion was becoming worse in Paris, at least in France, generally speaking, the order had made progress. "But it is very unfortunate," he continued, "that the monarchy was not proclaimed in Bordeaux."

Without contradicting him specifically, I objected to him about the difficulty of such an act at that moment. The merger had not yet taken place, the princes of Orléans had not yet decided on the only thing suitable and essential to get there: to group themselves around the Count of Chambord. Furthermore, would it not have been rash to charge the monarchy with concluding a peace which, much more costly for France than those of 1814 and 1815, would have brought at least an identical result, i.e. mean a deep unpopularity for the House of Bourbon, under which it would have succumbed even more quickly than the Restoration government? — On this subject, d'Arnim said that foreign powers had not done, in 1830, what they should have done in favor of the French monarchy, and he maintained that the Duke of

Orléans had committed a real crime by accepting the crown. "Instead of these dispositions," I observed, "England, for example, has shown itself to be very hostile to the House of Bourbon. — Which is all the more extraordinary, continued d'Arnim, because this country still had at its head the men who had contributed the most to putting it back on the throne in 1814. But no one can ever count on England."

These words of the German ambassador, like those of the chief of the general staff of the German armies, seemed to me interesting to report; I already noticed at that time, there were still in Prussia fundamentally conservative statesmen who understood, for France which they had beaten but whose destruction they did not want, and for Europe, the importance and usefulness of a conservative and monarchical government. (G.-B.)

Almost the same day on which I informed the minister of the departure of Mr. d'Arnim for Paris, Mr. Thiers, modifying once again his last resolutions of April 18,

We have seen that on this date Mr. Thiers left Mr. de Gontaut free to choose the best moment to talk and act.

wrote to me and had Mr. de Rémusat write to me to approach Prince Bismarck as soon as possible and to ask him frankly his intentions. It was to return to the instructions he had given me in his great letter of the 14th. the negotiations aimed at the payment of the three billion and the evacuation of the territory; 2° an agreement between me and the so-called army commission on the principle of compulsory service.

"The two things are false.

I only postponed it because I was waiting for M. d'Arnim to return. As for me, I am completely determined to deal immediately for the payment of the three billion, as quickly as the entire European market convened and committed will allow, according to the form that Mr. Bismarck prefers, and with the people who will agree with him. The natural condition will be the evacuation of the territory, the only magic wand with which I can obtain the vote of a national assembly.

As for the details of execution, they will be settled in the negotiation.

As for the question of the army, I am for a professional army, and against any revolutionary army, unfit for war from within as well as from without.

I may be forced to make concessions of words, but I will not make any concessions of things. Anyone who has dealt with men knows that we are often obliged to do so, even with the most firm and sincere convictions.

Here are my most complete thoughts on these very important things. I must add another, it is the longest peace that will be possible in Europe.

“Farewell, and all yours.”

M. Thiers, being unwell at the moment, could only write to me these few lines which he also authorized me to read to M. de Bismarck, if I judged it useful, without letting me take any notice. He told me this in a separate note, adding that he believed the time had come to speak and act.

Mr. de Rémusat, on the same date, took it upon himself to paraphrase the President's letter. “Please,” he wrote, “please explain to Mr. de Bismarck that if we delayed in discussing the question with him, it is because we have been waiting for a month for Mr. d'Arnim, who delayed much longer. that he had announced it, and who had told us, when leaving,

that M. de Bismarck wanted that the matter is handled directly with him, from Arnim, and without taking any third party into his confidence." Mr. de Rémusat recommended that I express to the Chancellor our desire to know, from now on, his opinion on the form to be given to the operation, as well as on the manner of conducting the negotiation, on the place and on the person by whom he wishes; that it be opened and followed, and on the time at which he intended it to be started, adding that the opinion of the French government was that it should be started immediately.

Returning to this hackneyed question of the reorganization of our army, and that of compulsory service, advocated today throughout Europe, Mr. de Rémusat repeated to me almost the same arguments as Mr. Thiers and he finished his letter with these words: "I am impatiently awaiting your first dispatches; I have no doubt that you will succeed in establishing everything that we have an interest in knowing with certainty, etc., etc."

It was certainly desirable to dispose of Prince Bismarck well and not to display ideas or resolutions whose too sharp opposition to his own would further increase the difficulties of a negotiation that was already very delicate in itself. Nevertheless, Mr. Thiers, it must be admitted, advanced imprudently and without obvious necessity on the question of compulsory service in France. That his reflections and his experience had made him resolutely opposed to this system, nothing could be more natural, and, according to a certain number of competent people, perhaps nothing is more sensible. But to affirm and charge myself with affirming to Prince Bismarck that he believed himself assured of bringing the National Assembly to his ideas, and that, if he were obliged to make a few concessions of words, he would not make any of them. things, it was necessarily exposing oneself

to receiving a denial of the facts, and to being accused, although wrongly, of having wanted to deceive the German government. It seems that M. de Rémusat, who was endowed with great political tact, understood that there was some disadvantage in coming forward so much, because his instructions recommended a little more reserve to me than those of the President.

In any case, was the confidential information given to Mr. Thiers by General de Manteuffel - because he got it from him - accurate or a bit haphazard? The fact remains that Prince Bismarck, to whom I had requested an interview through the intermediary of the President of the Imperial Chancellery, Mr. Delbrück, did not respond to me. I wrote to Mr. Thiers on April 27:

“Ten minutes ago, I had a new interview with Mr. Delbrück;

The previous interview, during which Mr. de Gontaut had requested an interview with Prince Bismarck, had taken place on the 23rd, following a telegram addressed the day before to the ambassador by the Minister of Foreign Affairs: “... According to reliable opinions, we believe it appropriate to inform the Berlin cabinet very soon that we are ready to deal with the early payment of our pecuniary commitments. You can, if the Chancellor is detained by other matters, ask Mr. Delbrück to inform him of our intentions...”

I went with him as far as it seemed useful and prudent to go, before finding myself face to face with Prince Bismarck. It's obvious that the Chancellor doesn't want to see me yet, and I don't think I should force his door. You are willing to report to me and your confidence encourages me... Unable to talk with M. de Bismarck, I took the opportunity to explain

myself to a certain extent with considerable men who, obviously, report my words...

Among others with Marshal de Moltke whose interview I reported above. (G.-B.)

M. d'Arnim leaves this evening and will probably be in Paris on Monday; you will have, I think, through him, the answer to the enigma..." The answer to the enigma is probably that Count I of Arnim being in charge of the Chancellor's instructions, the latter did not think it appropriate, - for now, at least - unless it begins a parallel negotiation, so to speak, with the French embassy in Berlin.

On the 29th, I wrote again to M. de Rémusat: "Nothing about Prince Bismarck; no response to my request for an interview, which I find uncourteous; in my opinion, we must use a lot of moderation with the Chancellor, but we cannot allow him everything"

Mr. de Rémusat, writing to me several times. days later, regarding the arrival of the Count of Arnim and the start of the negotiations, said to me: "Mr. d'Arnim who, on armaments, is wonderful, on the rest he is not bad; says he is ready to enter into negotiations, but he is a little vague, a little reserved; I foresee difficulties, without knowing what they are, which is quite Bismarck's way. I don't like to commit in advance, preferring to reserve the resource of the unexpected and the ability to make sudden resolutions depending on the circumstances and the mood of the moment. It could well be that this was the explanation of his conduct towards you; he would have preferred not to see you than to answer questions which could have been precise and forced him to commit. If he changes his mind, you will do well to accept the meeting; but you will only speak retrospectively about what you were responsible for discussing... If you can catch something clear

in passing, either on the conditions of the financial transaction, or on the questions of evacuation, such as the duration, the mode, the staggering, do not worry about it. We always start with the idea of a total evacuation before the spring of 73, for example half at the end of the year, another half in May next year. So don't grant more, without taking a tone of absolutes."

The arrival of Count d'Arnim in Paris and the first interviews with him had therefore shed no light on the Chancellor's intentions, and people persisted in telling me to see it in order to know a little more! Unnecessary punishment; the sphinx intended to remain impenetrable. I saw him once, however, at a grand dinner given by the Russian ambassador, on April 30, on the occasion of his sovereign's feast day. Placed at the table, far from him, I could not talk to him; he, for his part, without showing any apparent affectation, did not come back to me, and, almost immediately after dinner, he retired. It was very clear proof of his desire not to enter into an explanation with me.

That same evening, moreover, the Emperor, whom I met at a ball in a private house, approached me and addressed me some satisfactory words about the English dispatch which had caused so much noise a few days before, without however having been taken absolutely seriously: "Well! he said to me, Mr. Count d'Arnim having arrived in Paris, now all these noises will have to stop!"

To my great annoyance, the Italian minister, hearing this sentence, because he was very close to us, came closer. "It is inexplicable," continued the King, addressing Mr. de Launay as well as me, "we did not even have the thought of sending a note to the French government; he didn't send us anymore, and now the English newspapers are inventing and putting into circulation the most serious news without the slightest foundation!

"I was as surprised as Your Majesty," I continued, "because I knew very well that nothing, on either side, could have motivated it. "These are stock market speculations, and nothing else," said the King.

I would have seized this opportunity to talk to His Majesty about the negotiations which M. d'Arnim was beginning, and about what had been the subject of my recent instructions, but, the Italian minister persisting in not move, I had to give it up, and the Emperor did not take long to move away.

Was it by design that the Italian minister had placed himself as a third party between the King and me? A member of the diplomatic corps, present at the evening, told me that this was probably so, and added: "Intimacy is growing closer between Germany and Italy; Prince Humbert is expected in Berlin for the baptism of the royal prince's last child."

I sent these things to Versailles, still insisting, according to the dispositions that I continued to notice in Berlin, on the usefulness of postponing, as much as possible, the discussion of military law in the Assembly. But, on this question and on the ease of imposing one's way of seeing on the deputies, Mr. Thiers continued to have illusions.

On this subject, and on the subject of the negotiations which were dragging on painfully in Paris, Mr. de Rémusat wrote me a long letter, which I reproduce almost in its entirety, without removing certain points foreign to the negotiation, but also interesting.

Versailles, May 12, 1872.

Your letter of the 9th, which I received today, goes beyond the questions that I was going to allow myself to address to you. The first related to the health of the Chancellor. M. d'Arnim says that he will not leave as soon as people think, and that his health is only disturbed by ordinary

accidents. I rather believe that as you say, without assuming an exaggerated seriousness, that these accidents took on a sufficiently great intensity to require special care and the prolongation of one of these absences to which he has accustomed us. In the state of physical and moral irritation that you describe to me, it would perhaps be neither appropriate nor useful to insist on an interview, to the point of snatching it away as a favor. I think it will be enough to tell someone, so as to be sure that they will be told again, that you doubly regret not having seen them, since it would have been a farewell visit the day before. of an absence of any duration. If, by some return of politeness, he receives you, you will not press him on anything, you will only make allusions to our big affairs, and you will avoid subjects that could give rise to dispute. In a word, you will see it coming.

"I believe, like you, the time has come to address the questions that I indicated to you in a long dispatch, and which are linked to the Treaty of Frankfurt. But it is not with Mr. Bismarck that we must speak about it. Most questions are questions of fact; it's just a matter of how they understand certain articles and what they intend to do. What we are asking for are specific answers. It is true that this is a lot to ask of Germans.

"It is not, moreover, Mr. d'Arnim that we will turn to for some. Apart from a rather benevolent politeness towards people, he is discouragingly cold about things; he doesn't come out of the vague and doesn't seem to be interested in anything. I believe that a general concern about his health and a great boredom with life in Paris, where society seems to shun him, have an effect on his mood. He sees everything in black, and while saying from time to time that he wants negotiation and the consequences it should have, he only alleges difficulties and never resolves them. I believe that he

has no more precise instructions than a fixed opinion; he seems discouraging and discouraged. I still have doubts about the success of the negotiations, although they are seriously underway.

“According to M. d’Arnim, the King is the great obstacle; not that the King has bad designs; but he doubts the stability in France and the duration of current power. He wrongly imagines that the triumph of the revolutionary parties, which would only weaken and desolate France, would make it aggressive and warlike. This fear, it is said, haunts his mind and it is difficult to reassure him. This is what the speech of the Duke of Audiffret-Pasquier will not have done, a speech which, in terms of talent, well deserved its immense success, but who, I’m afraid, is not as prudent as it is dazzling. He raised acclamations in favor of compulsory service, and you know what indignation this system causes in Germany which, however, would probably give us an army more anarchic than warlike. You can boldly say that Mr. Thiers has reached an agreement with the Assembly committee and believes, through a concession of words and an amendment granted to him, to have obtained the reality of what he desires. He is perfectly sincere in this hope. I hope that it will come true, but I will tell you, in complete confidence, that this question of the reorganization of the army has always seemed to me the most critical of all, and, if there is a pitfall where we can break, I fear it will be the one.

“We will, I believe, overcome the other difficulties. This series of unfortunate revelations that we provoked about the last war is one of them. Whatever one thinks of Marshal Bazaine, I doubt that his trial was a useful thing. What interest do we have in decrying our army? The wrongs of the servants diminish those of the head of the Empire, and, if Mr. d’Arnim is

to be believed, these prosecutions would only harm us in Europe. Mr. Thiers fought in vain to prevent them.

"I don't know if M. de Bismarck thought he was setting a trap for the Pope by sending him his cardinal. But whether he had foreseen it or not, the refusal of the court of Rome could serve him. The general public, who know neither the customs nor the reasons of the Holy See, will perhaps reproach it for having lacked a spirit of conciliation. Our news, however, tells us that great moderation and great calm of mind reign at the moment in the Vatican...

Mr. de Rémusat touched in passing on several questions which occupied us, independently of the negotiation of the liberation of the territory, or which agitated public opinion. I will say two words very succinctly:

Among the questions raised by the Treaty of Frankfurt, there were some whose settlement offered quite great difficulties, such as the nationality options stipulated in favor of the inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine, in a certain period and following certain conditions. Mr. de Rémusat recommended that I treat this subject "as a matter of detail which would not rise, if possible, to the sphere of politics nor to the height of Prince Bismarck." It was in fact with Mr. Delbruck, president of the imperial chancellery, that I discussed this long and delicate question; it was not without sometimes leading to discussions between him and me in which the susceptibility of the winner was given free rein.

The trial of Marshal Bazaine dissatisfied the Germans. They showed an interest in the marshal that was quite difficult to explain. One evening, Prince Frédéric-Charles, while chatting with me, pretended not to understand what reproaches could be leveled at

Bazaine. He, a Prussian general, could say, on the contrary, that the marshal had done his duty entirely and nothing but his duty. The Emperor, that same evening, and, a few days later, Marshal de Moltke, expressed the same view to me on several occasions. This feeling was shared by all Prussian generals. We saw, in Mr. de Rémusat's letter, that he too, like the President of the Republic, disapproved of the trial. Already, towards the end of the war, in Bordeaux, Mr. Thiers maintained that there was no reason to reproach the marshal that could be brought before a war council. But, in France, public opinion and that of the army were of a completely contrary opinion; the trial took place, and the result justified those who felt that the marshal had failed in his duties as army leader. Mr. de Rémusat was alluding to certain unfortunate revelations which had occurred during the war and its causes. Generals and diplomats, in fact, had believed it necessary to justify themselves regarding the responsibility these cruel events placed on them; it was wrong, because, apart from the fact that most of these disclosures were unfortunate in themselves, those who made them evaded too easily, too soon, at least from the duty of discretion more imperative for them than for any other.

Concerning this cardinal that the court of Rome allegedly refused to receive, it was Cardinal de Hohenlohe, appointed by the Chancellor, suddenly, and at the height of the battle between the Prussian government and its Catholic subjects, ambassador to the Pope. This appointment, interpreted in various senses, presented by more or less unofficial newspapers as a guarantee given to Catholic interests,

or as a desire on the part of government to establish a modus vivendi between Germany and the Holy See, while remaining firm in anti- ultramontane policy, was generally viewed by Catholics at least with distrust. She found no declared favor anywhere, and the Pope did not approve of her. (G.-B.)

Despite the assurances given by Mr. d'Arnim, Bismarck left Berlin on May 18; he was going to rest in the countryside and probably thus avoid any request for an interview and explanations; but he would probably be more involved in the negotiation with France than was thought in Paris. Here is what I find in one of my letters to Mr. de Rémusat dated May 25: "A member of the Bundesrath, usually well informed and who has no hostility against France,

Baron de Koenneritz, Minister of Saxony in Berlin.
(G.-B.)

believes in the Chancellor's desire to deal now, and, according to him, the negotiation should hardly last more than two months. M. de Bismarck wanted first of all to live in Varzin in absolute retirement and not to hear of any affair, large or small. We managed to get him to reconsider this resolution; he took with him Mr. Bücher, a sort of advisor and private secretary, who, in his youth, appeared on the barricades in Berlin and spent a long time in exile in America from where he returned transformed. It is with Mr. Bücher that the Chancellor will take care of all the big matters. He would return to Berlin a few days, before the end of the Reichstag, with the intention of presenting and having measures adopted against religious congregants and against the Jesuits in particular, in accordance with the wish expressed eight days ago by the Parliament!! I have often had the opportunity to write to you:

almost all the statesmen in Berlin, Prussians or foreigners, Catholics or Protestants, deplore and fear this tendency to enter the path of religious persecution..."

The month of June was very laborious. From the 1st to the 12th, I received up to six letters from MM. Thiers and de Rémusat, worried about the attitude of Mr. d'Arnim, cold, silent, even equivocal, worried about not knowing anything precise on the part of the prince of Bismarck, tormented by seeing that, despite all their efforts, the negotiation seems not to be moving forward, like a ship remains broken down for lack of wind to fill its sails.

How does Prince Bismarck view the negotiation? What is his disposition towards us? This is what Mr. de Rémusat wanted to know clearly, the words and attitude of the Count of Arnim remaining in an obscurity impossible to penetrate. He would have liked that, without forcing the Chancellor's door, but with a certain insistence on seeing him, I would go straight to seek an answer to these questions, and that I would take advantage of this opportunity to affirm to him our invariable resolution to maintain the peace and tell him that our military organization was so little designed to cause him umbrage, that nothing, so to speak, had yet been done and that we had not even raised the annual contingent with a peace footing. Mr. Thiers, for his part, would have liked me to see the King to tell him the same things again, in a word, to reassure him about our arrangements. But M. de Bismarck, as I said, had left Berlin without noise, more than a fortnight ago, and it was beginning to be believed that he would never move from Varzin again. As for asking the King for an audience for such a case, the step would have been unusual at first, then useless, because it was obvious that His Majesty was avoiding any discussion with me on politics at that moment, just like the Secretary of State Mr. de Thile. I had just had new proof of this

at the evening given, on May 31, by the Italian minister in honor of Prince and Princess Humbert.

People in Paris did not know what to think of the attitude of the Count of Arnim; his notes to the French ministry were cold, perhaps even, in the opinion of Mr. de Rémusat, contrary to any serious understanding, and then, while in his language suggesting many difficulties, he recommended that we have good hope and faith in him. He produced combinations for the financial side of the question, giving the impression that they were agreeable to his government, when there was reason to fear that they would only suit him and that, perhaps, he then presented them to Berlin as being specific to Mr. Thiers, which placed on the latter a responsibility which did not belong to him.

It returned to Versailles that the mere noise of the negotiations would have revived the mistrust and threats of the military party; It was only too true, in any case, that they had once again excited the German press, and that it loudly insisted on the need not to evacuate French territory without taking political guarantees in return. I myself was told of more or less well-founded rumors, but to which it was good to pay attention, at least as symptoms of the state of mind, this one, for example, that the German government would not consent that it was very difficult to leave France free to build places for the defense of its borders before March 2, 1874, whatever the arrangements to be made for the liberation of the territory and the anticipation of payments. This was the situation. It was, as we see, always the same suspicions and the same grievances, to which time, no more than our good will, our good faith, our loyal explanations, seemed to bring the slightest temper. All this formed, we will agree, a scabrous, difficult negotiation terrain on which it was easy to get lost.

The correspondence between MM. Thiers and de Rémusat, on the one hand, and me, on the other, was therefore very lively. It was only on June 7 and 8 that a communication from Mr. de Thile, provoked by me, finally shed some light on the resolution of the German government; but the exchange of ideas and news did not continue with less activity between Versailles and the French embassy in Berlin throughout the month of June and the beginning of July.

We were prepared to pay as and when the German government wanted; the latter, on the contrary, showed himself to be harsh and meticulous about the mode and time of liberation. "Six weeks ago," a member of the Federal Council confided to me on May 23, "the military party won: no evacuation of territory before the time set by the treaties. Since then, appeasement has gained ground and the peace party is regaining the upper hand, but we would not want a release proportional to the payments; thus, we would evacuate two departments only after payment of half of the compensation, we would evacuate the other four after total payment." And my interlocutor added: "Be certain that there are points, especially Belfort, that we will abandon as late as possible." Mr. Thiers had made several payment proposals, leaving it to the Germans to explain the method and term of evacuation. I transcribe a passage from the letter he wrote to me on this subject, June 1:

"Here is what I would like, if it's possible.

We must not force M. de Bismarck's door; our dignity nor prudence allows it; but if an opportunity presented itself to see him, it would have to be seized. If you could see the King, or any other person well placed to get the truth to where it should be effective, you would have to affirm this:

1 We want to pay, pay as soon as possible, irresistible proof that we want peace;

2 We leave to the Prussian government the choice of the form of payment;

3 We agree to the gradual evacuation;

4 Finally, we want to know what we want; because we cannot act without a positive response, and the House, which is essential for us to vote on a financial measure, could well leave in a month.

We must avoid any flashy approach that could lead to a near breakup if we do not succeed; but if you could tell this to the King, by a safe channel, it would be very good.

I read the dispatch in which a person of note told you that the peace party had won. I would like to have proof of this. But, in any case, observe the state of things and minds carefully, and make sure that people are sincere with us...

I must tell you that we have been insinuated with the desire to keep Belfort, Verdun, the places of the Meuse until full payment. I said nothing on this subject, not wanting to create any stumbling block, any absolute impediment; I kept a tight silence; we must do the same by using the *ad referendum*.

Here, my dear Monsieur de Gontaut, are all my confidences for today. They require deep secrecy and a prompt response, unless you can come yourself, if it were for two days, and without missing M. de Bismarck.

"All yours from the heart."

So then:

Pay, - before due date, - in the form chosen by Germany, - against evacuation proportional to the payments, - these were the proposals of the French government as a starting point for the negotiation. These proposals remained unanswered. But MM. Thiers and de Rémusat were mistaken in believing that the Chancellor of Germany and his ambassador in Paris were deaf, when they were only mute

and allowed the negotiation to sleep because they were withdrawn.

On June 3, I sent a dispatch to Versailles in which I explained what motivated, in my opinion, this vagueness about which the government was complaining and worrying. It was the persistence of the disagreement in Berlin between the political party and the military party. Prince Bismarck wanted to treat, but he encountered opposition to his views. "To my opinion, I said, Mr. de Bismarck sees things from further and higher than the military party. He understands the dangers of a prolonged occupation from the point of view of the relations between France and Germany, from the point of view of the opinion of Europe which, concerned with the maintenance of general peace, is eager to see achieve the liquidation of all accounts between the two nations, from the point of view of the security of its debt which would compromise the resumption of revolutionary agitations in France, an interruption in the resumption of work and this unforeseen event suspended on the destinies of the whole world, while everything guarantees it today. Perhaps he is particularly struck by the disadvantages of the status quo, because of the ulterior designs of his policy. He therefore wishes to come to an agreement with France. the double basis, consistent with equity as with the treaties, of the payment of the indemnity and the evacuation of the territory, except to then settle the details of execution The military party, on the contrary, represented by the marshal of Moltke and by the Emperor himself, in this circumstance, would like to delay the settlement of the question. If he is very keen to receive the compensation, he would no less attach importance to retaining the territory occupied by the German troops as long as possible, which in his eyes would be an essential guarantee against the reorganization of the military forces of the France and against

the worrying uncertainties of his future. Prince Bismarck has succeeded in making the principle of the resumption of negotiations prevail; but the Emperor is showing himself to be difficult, demanding in the conditions. All the resolutions are delayed by this antagonism, and it is affirmed that the Chancellor, dissatisfied, has once again taken the pretext of his health to move away and wait in Varzin for the end of all these tensions."

I read your interesting dispatch of June 3, wrote M. Thiers to Mr. de Gontaut, and I believe it to be closer to the truth than what we are told and what is written to us from all sides. The crisis is made up of the struggles of the war party against the peace party, and the cause of the delays would be the difficulty of explaining itself to us. Mr. de Bismarck, in this hypothesis, would have gone to Varzin to rest from these tiring resistances opposed to his views, and perhaps to use his bad humor to overcome certain wills. I would rather believe that than anything else, and besides I am inclined to think that it is the truth.

We will have noticed, among the number reasons which pushed Prince Bismarck to no longer postpone negotiations with France, the concerns of Europe, worried about the prolongation of a state of affairs disturbing for general peace. A confidence from the English ambassador did not let me ignore them. My colleague believed, for his part, that world peace would run formidable risks, as long as the Germans occupied French territory and that compensation would not be paid or guaranteed by any combination whatsoever. He went so far as to consider it desirable that the whole of Europe should demonstrate the value it would attach to the quickest possible settlement of the pending question

between France and Germany. Lord Lyons, the English ambassador in Paris, shared Lord Odo Russell's sentiment in this regard, if I understood him correctly.

I could only approve of such a way of seeing. A demonstration by Europe in this sense could have great importance; but the indiscretion of the St. Petersburg cabinet, of which Count Arnim had informed me, it will be remembered, made me very reserved. I was permitted, however, not to conceal from the ambassador, as a matter of personal opinion, that if the great powers considered it important for the peace of the world that these delicate questions were definitively resolved, it was their own interests they would serve by pressing the two governments to negotiate; and mine being very willing to do so, it was the Berlin cabinet above all that had to decide. Unquestionably, I added, a purely moral intervention by the powers would be useful and desirable; but, to be effective, it had to be spontaneous, and as for France, it could not demand it.

By informing Mr. de Rémusat of my conversation, I ended my letter with this reflection: "If, finally understanding that the disturbance caused by a struggle between two powerful nations affects general security, Europe determines to at least give its advice in a sense of appeasement, there is here the beginning of arbitration to which no people can remain indifferent, to which none of them can treat lightly; it is a guarantee of peace for the future; it is at the same time the manifestation, too late it is true, but entirely to the honor of France, of the importance attached everywhere to the situation of our country in the world." Unfortunately, everything was limited to this conversation between the English ambassador and me and a few words exchanged on the same subject several days later. Whether the English government did not share the opinion of its agent, or whether Prince Bismarck

discouraged him, supposing that he made overtures to him in this regard, the fact remains that I did not heard more about it.

Around the same time, I was finally able to send my government certain and, to a certain point, satisfactory information on the negotiation. Reading the Official Journal of the Empire had provided us with a valuable indication. We had noticed there, at the embassy, that the Emperor had, very recently and twice, gathered at his home the most important men of his ministry, Mr. Camphausen, the Minister of Finance, who was very attentive in questions of that nature, M. Delbruck, the count of Roon, Minister of War, M. de Thile finally. He is silent very likely acted in these councils of French affairs. Requesting an audience with the sovereign, in such circumstances, would have been, as I have already said, a step of a completely unusual nature. To wait for Prince Bismarck to return would have been to wait indefinitely, because I had just been assured that he would not return to Berlin before the end of the session. I then decided to ask M. de Thile for an interview; I went to see him on June 7, and this is what I telegraphed to the ministry as I left his home:

"Mr. de Thile confidentially gave me the following information: The various proposals from Mr. Thiers were addressed to Varzin. Prince Bismarck brought them together and sent them back here with his opinion. His Majesty has the file in his hands and will keep it for a few days before returning it to Varzin. The answer, in its definitive formula, will then be made by Prince Bismarck, and Mr. de Thile will give me notice of it when he transmits it to Paris, no doubt, he told me, from the 20 on the 25th of this month.

"Stepping forward more than he usually does, he told me that, in all probability, the response from the German government would, in substance, conform to our wishes, the debate remaining on the details and the conditions. He

repeated these assurances to me twice, using these words; "You can have confidence."

In the course of our conversation, the Secretary of State and I exchanged mutual assurances of our desire to preserve peace. "Be certain," said M. de Thile to me, "Germany does not want to violate the peace; she will be happy to enter into an agreement with you for the execution of the commitments you have made."

The French government was satisfied with this news. Mr. de Rémusat wrote to me that they had arrived at the right time to help him see a little more clearly in the situation. "The President suspects," he said, "that the current thinking of the Prussian cabinet could well now be to attract negotiations to Berlin. We would have no objection to this change of location. Mr. d'Arnim's way of negotiating, despite his courtesy, will leave us with no regrets." Mr. de Rémusat further told me: "It is believed in part of the diplomatic corps that the Chancellor's thoughts are now absorbed by his plans for an anti-religious campaign. That was also my opinion; this was partly the explanation of the Chancellor's prolonged silence."

The intimate nature of these pages authorizes me, I think, to reproduce two lines from Mr. de Rémusat's letter and the response I made to it. We will see the relationships that a collaboration formed late in life had already established between this man, as kind as he was intelligent, and me: "Farewell, sir, the more our relationships continue and become closer, the more they take on a character of intimacy, and, allow me to say, of friendship, which adds to the feelings of esteem that you have long inspired in me." I could cite many other passages in his letters similar to this one. I replied to him in these terms: "I would very much like to tell you, sir, how much I was sensitive to the lines

which end your letter of the 10th of this year. Nothing can touch me more than these testimonies of esteem and friendship coming from you. I entered the diplomatic career at an age when one no longer starts anything; You welcomed me and directed me with so much kindness that I saw it as a duty to bring, in the absence of talent, a lot of dedication to the very important and delicate interests with which Mr. Thiers and you believed they could entrust me. God grant us success! In any case, it will be an honor and a deep satisfaction for me to have been associated with your work and to share, to a certain extent, the sacrifice that you have so generously made of your rest.”

Our collaboration, which lasted until May 24, 1873, never ceased to be marked by mutual trust and cordiality from which I derived, for my part, as much pleasure as profit. Also, when the fluctuations of politics put an end to our official relations, they took nothing away from our private relations. We will see proof of this in the response that Mr. de Rémusat made to the sincere and saddened regrets that I addressed to him on the occasion of his retirement. Each time we met again in the suite, it was with equal pleasure and the same friendship.

It was not the same, unfortunately, between Mr. Thiers and me. The irritation produced in the latter by the loss of power made him unjust towards all those who, while not sharing his political opinions and never letting him ignore him, had faithfully and loyally helped him in his patriotic and difficult task. After having shown me — I can say this in all sincerity, certain of not being denied by any of my colleagues in the Assembly — a very keen taste, certainly keener than I

had expected and probably than I did not deserve it, and for whom I did not fail under any circumstances to show my gratitude, the former president turned his back on me one day when I was going to greet him in the Salle des Pasperdus, in Versailles, six months after his fall of power, without my ever being able to know or guess whether he had had, not a motive – there could not have been one – but a particular pretext for behaving in this way with me. These are, moreover, the sadness, the bitterness and the injustices of political life. I give thanks from the bottom of my heart to Mr. de Rémusat for not having made them known to me. (G.-B)

On June 11, I returned to Mr. de Thile's house. He told me that the file he had spoken to me about four days previously had been sent to Varzin, accompanied by the observations of the Emperor and the ministers, all of which also conformed to those of the Chancellor. In a few days, according to his forecasts, we could send his instructions to the Count of Arnim; he would immediately communicate the substance to me. "You can," he added, "from now on, consider, so to speak, as assured the acceptance of the double principle proposed by Mr. Thiers, pro-payment anticipated escalation and proportional evacuation."

As for the financial combinations that we were prepared to submit to the preferences of the German government, Mr. de Thile replied that they concerned us more than him. Certain payment methods might, it is true, not be considered acceptable by Germany, but ultimately the practical investigation was up to us.

I immediately informed M. de Rémusat of this conversation. The business was finally working. But if the

difficulties were flattened on the outside, unfortunately, on the inside, obstacles of another nature could create embarrassments for us which would have an impact on the progress of the negotiations.

We were in Versailles in the middle of a discussion of military law. Mr. de Rémusat wrote to me, on the morning of the 10th, that a very clever passage from a speech given the day before by the President of the Republic made him augur the good effect it would produce abroad. That same day, Mr. Thiers again went up to the tribune; he had spoken admirably, but the debates having taken a rather heated turn, Mr. Thiers had the unfortunate inspiration of once again giving the Assembly the bargain and offering his resignation. I have already said the price that Germany attached to keeping the President in power. All the incidents of this session, and this one in particular, produced a deplorable effect in Berlin. M. de Thile showed himself to be very concerned about this during the visit I made to him; the debates were not over; he feared what would happen next. I hastened to inform the government of these arrangements by telegraph; I asked to be reassured without delay. I also wrote to Mr. de Rémusat about it with a certain emotion. I did not hide from him my regrets that Mr. Thiers had judged it appropriate to speak once again of his resignation, because it would be viewed in Berlin with the greatest concern and could compromise the success of our negotiations. The next day, I received the following telegram from the President himself, the terms of which were obviously calculated to be read without indiscretion at Wilhelmstrasse as well as at the French Embassy.

“Versailles, noon 15, June 12, 1872.

“My dear Viscount de Gontaut, do not conceive or retain any concern about the latest discussions of military law. I am not a supporter of the obligatory service, which, in

France, would result in poorly disciplined soldiers. I was therefore obliged to fight with the utmost vigor to push back the bottom of the system and I succeeded.

The military law had just been passed on the 10 June. Mr. Thiers had written to Mr. de Gontaut that he would perhaps be obliged to make concessions of words but would not make any concessions of things. In fact, the fixing of the duration of service at five years, imposed by him on the Assembly which wanted to reduce it to three years, only made it possible to incorporate, each year, only half of the contingent. The other half, who could be called up in the event of war, returned to their homes on unlimited leave. The division between these two parties was not done by drawing lots. Thus, the compulsory service for all, theoretically recognized in the law, was not practically applied.

Calm has been restored, and there remains not a single question which, in this session, could divide the House and the government. Count on a fairly long period of stability and the faithful execution of the commitments made with Germany.

“I received your latest news and I thank you. We are awaiting a definitive and precise response in order to make the subsequent financial proposals to the House.”

The same day, I received a new communication from Mr. deThile. It was not a few days later, as he had told me in our conversation the day before, it was twenty-four hours later, that Mr. d'Arnim's instructions were sent to him. He warned me about it. The next day, the 13th, I went to his house to learn about the resolutions of the German government, as he had promised me, but, listening to his communication, I could not help but let him see the disappointment that she had in me.

was causing. Mr. de Thile told me: "In all probability, the response of the German government will, in substance, conform to your wishes, have confidence",

Mr. de Thile is an honest man with whom I have maintained relations for which I have never had anything but to praise myself, and I am very disposed to believe that by using this language, on the 7th, he was in good faith; but was he well informed, I mean fully informed? And yet, he told me again that same day: "If you knew me better you would know that I never move forward lightly." He added, it is true: "I can therefore tell you, very much between us, that the negotiations which have begun bode favorably." The position of Mr. de Thile was quite difficult to define: he was an official intermediary in title who often, in fact, was barely unofficial. We remember his responses, in 1870, to Mr. Benedetti which, according to the latter, were in contradiction with the reality of the facts. This is because it was convenient for the Chancellor to converse with the ambassadors through an intermediary whom he disavowed on occasion. (G.-B.)

Now, here was the response of the wing government to our proposals:

On February 1, 1873, payment of a billion, and evacuation of two departments; a year later, payment of a second billion in exchange for the evacuation of two other departments. The last payment and evacuation deadline will be March 2, 1875.

The negotiation followed in Paris somewhat modified this first response, but it hardly deviated from it.

Here is a passage from the letter that I wrote to the President of the Republic the same evening of my interview with the German Secretary of State.

"Berlin, June 13, 1872.

"Mr. President,

M. de Thile, in introducing them to me, seemed a little embarrassed; at least his explanations, insufficiently developed and confused in certain parts, left me with this impression. I did not hide from him, in a reserved measure and in very few words, that I felt some surprise about it.

"Indeed, you told me in all your letters that while making your proposals, you had laid down this principle: "We want to pay early, pay in the form that we want in Berlin, asking as a natural and necessary condition the evacuation as soon as payment." And this principle established, you wrote to me on June 1, you clarified it in the three proposals that you sent to Berlin through the intermediary of Mr. Count d'Arnim. Now, in the response given to you, if we agree, on the one hand, to an evacuation of two departments against the advance payment of a billion on February 1, 1873, on the other, we step back 'one year beyond the term set by the treaty for total evacuation. I believe that the country will only pay attention to this last clause. This is, in more reserved terms, what I said to Mr. de Thile,

"He replied to me by agreeing that the general interest was certainly opposed to too long an occupation of our territory, and that this of the Germans in particular was not to extend it. I explained that I was at least as convinced as he was, and that France was providing proof of its desire to put an end to the current situation by offering to pay early. "But," continued the Secretary of State, "if you can pay in full before March 1, 1874, we will immediately evacuate the entire

occupied territory; it's a completely natural thing." I took note of his words; but they contradict the answer we sent you.

They were also with the assertions of the Count of Arnim. (G.-B.)

You said: "We will pay you early." You are told: "Pay us a third before the due date, but we only want to receive the last third one year after this due date, the evacuation always remaining proportionate to the payments..."

The response from the German government having been given for Versailles, I only had to wait for what was there would pass; correspondence between my government and me is slowing down.

The discussion had already begun between MM. Thiers and de Rémusat, on the one hand, and the Count of Arnim, on the other, when an official newspaper in Berlin spoke for the first time of the negotiation. It was June 19. After recalling the stipulations of the peace treaty of May 10, 1871, relating to the payment of war indemnity and the evacuation of French territory, the *Correspondance provinciale* added:

"The French government has recently and confidentially expressed the desire to enter into negotiations with the German government with a view to obtaining, by means of financial guarantees and by accelerating the payment of compensation, the early evacuation of the parts of the territory still occupied.

The German governments have accepted these proposals with good will, especially with a view to thus demonstrating their confidence in the policy followed by the current government of France.

The talks (*pourparlers*) which took place recently in Paris allow us to believe that France's final proposals will very

soon be communicated. The negotiations themselves will be conducted in Paris."

On June 21, M. de Rémusat wrote to me from Versailles:

"Excuse me, sir, if I was a little late in writing to you. However, I know how impatient you must be to hear from us.

"Eight days ago, Mr. d'Arnim sent us a very succinct letter with a project which hardly differed from the communication made to you by Mr. de Thile. Then, in one or two interviews, he opened up more... Finally, we came to the following bases: two months after ratification, half a billion and the evacuation of two departments; and two other departments evacuated in the current of 1873 after the third half-billion, according to us, after the fourth, according to him (this is a disputed point to which we hold); evacuation of Meurthe, Moselle and Belfort, after the acquittal of the sixth half-billion. This acquittal could be postponed until March 1, 1875; but, in this case, financial guarantees could have been, as provided for in the treaty, substituted for the territorial guarantees; they would take their place, and the evacuation could be 'operate on the indicated date of March 1874. In all cases, at whatever time the full payment is completed, the evacuation will be of right.

"We are in dissent on an article which would have the object of measuring the strength of the occupying army over the extent of the occupied territory; so that one would decrease with the other, as well as the amount of maintenance costs.

"A project in this direction will, I believe, be expedited in Berlin in twenty-four hours, if it is not already, keep these details to yourself, (since indiscretions which, assuredly, are not of our doing, have made them reach certain newspapers. open only if we open up to you. Please keep us informed of all

appearances that can make us judge the dispositions of those with whom we must be keen to come to an agreement. Mr. d'Arnim appears as eager as we are to put an end to it. We believe that in this respect the interest of both parties is the same, and we hope that the very modest concessions that remain to be made to us will be easily granted to us by minds as lofty as the mind of the King and that of the Chancellor."

These very modest concessions, in fact, in all cases very equitable, were mainly:

The evacuation of four departments after the payment of the third half a billion. Let us not forget, moreover, that the first two billion of the compensation had already been collected by the Germans.

The reduction of the strength of the occupying army, in proportion to the reduction in extent of the occupied territory.

However, despite our confidence in two minds as lofty as those of the King and Prince Bismarck, they were not granted to us. This is what I was soon informed of by Mr. de Thile.

On the 25th I went to see him. I was assured that the project prepared in Paris was sent back there that evening, slightly modified, and that the German government was prepared to finish it promptly and in a manner to our satisfaction. On the 29th, I returned to the Secretary of State and learned that, contrary to expectations, satisfaction had been refused to all our requests. The German government only agreed to evacuate the occupied third and fourth departments after payment of the fourth half-billion and not after payment of the third; he intended to maintain in France a corps of fifty thousand men until after full payment of the indemnity, a corps for which we were to pay the maintenance; as for the end of the complete evacuation, it was set for March 1, 1875, but we reserved the right to bring it forward by one

year if the French government gave good guarantees for the payment of the last billion.

The German government, it is permissible to say without being accused of exaggeration, abused its force. Without regard for the loyalty from which we had never parted, despite the acquired certainty of the execution of all our commitments, he did not have enough generosity to give satisfaction to our requests.

The convention was signed in Paris on June 29 by Mr. Thiers and the Count of Arnim. This was the end of the first phase of the negotiation; there was actually another one to go. The convention said that the two governments reserved the right to agree on the progress of the evacuation of the territory on condition that France would provide solid guarantees for the payment of the last billion. From now on our efforts were concentrated on this point, nothing should discourage us from liberating our fellow citizens in the East from the occupation of German troops as soon as possible. Finance was quick to make overtures to us on this subject. They were only listened to and followed after the completion of the large loan intended to provide us with the funds necessary for our payment. Interrupted by the summer season when all business was idle, they were resumed in earnest the following winter and resulted in the treaty of March 15, 1873, much more important than the convention of June 29.

This was received in France, as might be expected, with a certain discontent and disappointment caused, in particular, by the high number and prolonged stay of the German occupation troops.

M. Thiers, in the Notes and Souvenirs of M. Thiers, declared himself quite satisfied with them. It was he who had first proposed to Germany to delay full payment until March 1, 1875. "In summary," he said,

"this draft convention had the advantage of allowing us either to delay the full payment of our debt until March 1, 1875, if our financial situation obliges us to do so, we hope to obtain total evacuation in 1873, in the event that we have, on that date, the means to pay in cash or in financial guarantees accepted by the Prussian government." (p. 310.) — "I presented," he said again, "our agreement the day after (the signature) to the Assembly to which I explained that the terms of 1873, 1874 and 1875, fixed for payments, were optional for us and guaranteed us against demands that might preempt our means of paying, without limiting our right to pay and to evacuate before the expiry of these terms, and that the release only depended on our credit being greater than ever." (pp. 313-314).

These very natural impressions could not fail to be known fairly quickly in Berlin where they caused concern and uneasiness, from which perhaps more conciliatory dispositions were born. M. de Bleichröder, on the very day of his departure for Paris, confided to me that his peculiar dispatches talked about a certain disappointment that knowledge of the terms of the treaty, which had only recently reached the public, would have caused in France.

The same day — it was July 6 — M. de Thile questioned me on this point like a man who would like to be completely reassured. It seems that rumors had spread in Berlin that the Assembly would oppose the adoption of the treaty. I replied that despite the disappointment inflicted on certain hopes of milder conditions, there was no appearance that the Assembly would refuse its acceptance of the treaty. Mr. de Thile replied that on the subject of the reduction of the occupation corps, in the future, the interest of Germany being

in conformity with ours, there was every reason to believe that we could agree later on this regard.

MM. Thiers and de Rémusat, when authorizing me to take leave, wrote me a few words about the effect produced in France by the convention, expressing themselves in a more softened tone than that of the public. According to Mr. de Rémusat, if, in the first moment, it had not realized the exaggerated hopes that an imprudent press had created, it was appreciated more wisely today, and no complaints had been encountered. a little founded only in the four and especially the two departments where the occupying army should, when withdrawing, mass. "It seems to me," he added, "that we understand in Berlin that our common interest is to eliminate or at least to attenuate this cause of discontent, and I ask you to keep this good thought alive around you. I will even confide to you that if obtaining this relief for the populations required a sacrifice, we would not be far from doing it.

"I hope," he said again, "that our tax discussions, the tone of which has become very softened, will end without conflict, even if the opinions of the government do not always prevail. Everything seems to be calmly preparing for our major financial operations, that businessmen continue to augur very happily."

And here is what the President wrote to me in telegram:

The first lines of this telegram require a short explanation. By accepting the functions of ambassador, I had in no way abdicated my political opinions. Mr. Thiers was not unaware of this; he knew perfectly well that by taking me into the government he had not appointed a Republican, any more than by giving Mr. de Larcy the portfolio of public works. During the entire time that he occupied power and that Mr. de

Rémusat kept the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we exchanged many letters in which we discussed, from too often opposing points of view, the internal policy of France, which exercised, moreover, a considerable influence on foreign policy. On June 15, I sent a letter to Mr. Thiers on this subject. My political friends in the Assembly, among others the Duke de Broglie, had asked me, believing that Mr. Thiers' friendship for me gave me some right or some possibility of exercising a certain influence over him, had asked me asked, I say, to interpret their complaints against the tendencies which visibly pushed the President towards the left and led him not to faithfully execute what was called the Pact of Bordeaux, a sort of truce concluded temporarily between the parties of the Assembly. I shared their alarms, and I expressed them in a long letter to Mr. Thiers. The intimacy that existed between the latter and his minister of foreign affairs made their attacks and responses common, and perhaps, in certain respects at least, their correspondence. As a result of a confusion of papers, it was Mr. de Rémusat who replied a very remarkable letter to the one I had written to Mr. Thiers. (G.-B.)

“Can you imagine that your letter of June 15, which told me about our internal situation, had remained in the hands of Mr. de Rémusat, who had confused with his, and that I only received it yesterday. Without this incident, although overwhelmed with work, I would have taken a moment to respond to you. In a week we will be done with the taxes and the loan bill, and I will answer you throughout. In the meantime, rest assured; I am what I was when we parted so affectionately at Versailles, when you left for Berlin.

“For today, I limit myself to telling you that we will exchange the ratifications today or tomorrow, and I ask you, if you can, to see Mr. de Thile again, and to tell him how much we need the effect to be taken into account produced in France by the article of the treaty relating to the maintenance of occupation troops. It is in this respect only that the treaty was poorly received. So, press for help to make the burden of occupation less heavy on the departments which will remain the last to be occupied. I would very much like to know Mr. de Bleichröder's proposals on financial guarantees covering the third billion.

“I wish you a good cure in the charming stay of Schlangenbad and am always your sincere friend.”

I actually saw M. de Thile again before my departure; but during my stay at Schlangenbad I had a more favorable opportunity to plead our cause. The Emperor came there, on July 27, to pay a visit to his sister-in-law Princess Charles of Prussia, and, learning that I was also there, he was kind enough to have me express the desire to see me and my daughters. It was the day after, I believe, the day on which the subscription of the loan of three billion had taken place in Paris, succeeding well beyond what was even allowed to be predicted, because it gave a figure equivalent to fourteen times that of demand. No event could at that time give foreigners a higher idea of the vitality of France and the progress of order. No one could hide from me the admiration they felt for France's credit after its incredible misfortunes, although the unofficial newspapers tried to lessen its significance. The Emperor was not the last to show it to me. His usual graciousness, enhanced by the tone of an incomparable great lord, seemed to me increased by the satisfaction of the creditor seeing in the hands of his debtor the

gold that will pay and enrich him. "It's wonderful, he told me, money is flowing to you. Bleichroeder, who came to see me on his return from Paris, does not doubt that you will be able to pay before March 1, 1874."

The opportunity was favorable to say a few words to His Majesty about the convention of June 29 and the article in particular which motivated our complaints. While expressing the satisfaction that we must feel on both sides at having settled questions which until then awaited a precise solution, I pointed out to the Emperor that there was nevertheless one that the convention had resolved contrary to the hopes of the country and the Assembly in particular. Maintaining the current figure of the occupying army until the indemnity was fully paid had produced a painful impression; it was up to His Majesty to bring relief to our situation which would be far from harming his own interests, because the prolongation and burdens of the occupation could only multiply the causes of irritation, of conflicts perhaps, between both nations, and it was as important to the Germans as to the French to avoid them.

"It is true," replied the Emperor, "but there is an article in the convention which is an open door to achieving the reduction of the occupying troops.

It was article 6, thus conceived: "In the case where the number of German occupying troops would be reduced when the occupation is successively restricted, the costs of maintaining said troops will be reduced in proportion to their number."

"At least with regard to the last two departments, I recognize that such a considerable agglomeration of troops, on such a restricted territory, is not possible." And he was kind enough to promise me to give as much attention to this question as I could wish. "After the war of 1815," he continued,

“the occupation had been fixed for a period of five years, and, later, this period was shortened of two years.

Moreover, he added, it was largely out of consideration for the Duke of Richelieu that this concession was made to France. He was indeed one of the noblest and most respectable men I have known; he inspired everyone with the greatest confidence. “Your Majesty,” I observed, “can also have confidence in M. Thiers. “Yes, certainly,” replied the Emperor; I have complete confidence in Mr. Thiers, I consider myself happy to see him at the head of the government and I sincerely hope to see him stay there for a long time.” And he continued to speak to me of the President in very flattering terms, remembering having seen him formerly in Baden, and even in Berlin, in more distant times. “Quite recently,” he said, in a gracious tone, and perhaps with a touch of mischief, “he instructed my representative in Paris to remind me of him.”

I again pointed out to the Emperor the progress that the order had made in France. Calm could not suddenly return after a war like the one we had to fight, and after this terrible struggle against the Commune; it took time, wisdom, patriotism, and thanks to these combined elements anarchy had been defeated. If there were still some disagreements between Mr. Thiers and the majority of the Assembly, this was not what could worry Europe.

The Emperor gave signs of assent to my words on several occasions. It was the first time that I had such a prolonged interview with the sovereign and in such a — I could almost say — familiar tone. He addressed very diverse subjects, the Alabama affair, for example, in which he did not want to exercise the functions of arbitrator, for fear of having to prove England wrong, and therefore the mother-in-law of his son.

We called all the complaints the question of Alabama. addressed, after the Civil War, by the government of Washington, to England, which he criticized for having favored the Southern States and in particular for having allowed armed racing ships to be built on their behalf, in its ports. One of these, called the Alabama, captured a large number of American merchant ships. It was sunk, off the coast of Cherbourg, in a battle that remains famous, on June 19, 1864, by a vessel from the Northern States. England finally agreed, in 1871, to arbitration. The court meeting in Geneva sentenced her, in September 1872, to pay fifteen million dollars. She submitted to this sentence.

But what touched me the most, it was his promise to reduce the number of his troops, at least when they only had to occupy our last two departments. I immediately informed M. Thiers and M. Rémusat. The Emperor was preparing to go to Gastein, and at the same time to pay a visit to the Emperor of Austria, which he considered it a duty, he told me, because of the proximity of Ischl and Gastein; moreover, the prince imperial had just done the same.

By giving all this news to the President, I added one that I had just learned just as I was finishing my letter.

The telegraph announces, I told him, that the Emperor of Russia has decided to come to Berlin with a large retinue, on September 6. that is to say at the same time as the Emperor of Austria It was not expected, even in Berlin, it is said, although one of the unofficial organs of the Prussian government spoke of it. invitation. Will this meeting of the three Emperors be the occasion for an alliance between them? I don't think so. However, it obviously calls for our full attention.

Mr. de Bismarck does not want to make war on France, but he certainly seeks to isolate it from Europe.

It was, in fact, the announcement of an important event to which the so absorbing concerns of the question of indemnity and the liberation of our territory could no more leave us indifferent than inattentive. I will devote a special chapter to it. To finish this one, I think it would be useful to transcribe an article that the Provincial Correspondence, one of the unofficial organs of the Berlin cabinet, published on August 7 on the subject of the loan of three billion and its success. by my intelligent and zealous embassy secretary, Mr. Debains, it was also sent to me by him.

“To obtain the means to pay the remainder of the war indemnity, the French government has just issued a large loan with a capital of three billion, by way of public subscription on the main financial markets of Europe. The sum of forty-four billion was subscribed, or fourteen times the requested capital. This brilliant success of the subscription has caused great joy in France, and we cannot help but recognize that, to a certain point, this feeling is legitimate, if the French public knows how to guard itself against false interpretations. and knows how to be careful not to draw dangerous conclusions.”

After having observed that we should not let ourselves be led astray by the prestige of the figures, the sum of forty-four billion representing only the amount of subscriptions on paper, but not the amount of the sum that the real capitalists of Europe had seriously offered to the French administration, that the loan had been the subject of unbridled and natural speculation, finally that the loan securities would be found largely in the hands of stockbrokers and not serious subscribers , which was only a risky assertion, the Provincial Correspondence continued as follows: “Moreover, it would be completely inaccurate to want to explain this influx of

subscriptions by political reasons. The movements of the large capital market cannot be determined by impulses coming from a foreign region; they are determined solely by the financial goal that is to be achieved. Speculation has no other goal before its eyes than the gain it hopes for. This modest explanation of economic facts will not fail to be welcomed in France, if we remember that a few months ago, a purely patriotic subscription, organized with a view to accelerating the payment of war costs, had to be abandoned because it had not met with sufficiently active participation.

However, it cannot be denied that the success of the three-billion loan has a certain internal importance and a correlation with the overall political situation. Capital and speculation would have prudently kept themselves at a distance, if they had not felt that they were walking on solid ground, in the midst of an eminently peaceful political situation, if they had not been able to look to the future with confidence, if they had not been assured that the loan issued by France was intended to discharge the obligations that this State had contracted by treaty with Germany and thus to erase the last traces of the state of war. It is to this conviction that we must attribute the encouragement and support which the financial enterprise of the French government has met with throughout Europe.

Consequently, if this active participation in the loan has a political importance, it is in this sense that it constitutes a manifestation having as its object the strengthening of peace between Germany and France.

Furthermore, it has been desired to see in the success of the loan the expression of general confidence in the solvency of France and in the peaceful intentions of its government. This way of seeing seems perfectly true to us. Since the conclusion of the preliminaries of peace, Germany,

in all the arrangements which it has negotiated with France, started from this point of view that the French nation had both the power and the will to fulfill its financial commitments. Public sentiment in Europe has rallied around this opinion. Everyone admits with the greatest confidence that France has sufficient resources to pay its creditors, and that, under the leadership of the current government, it will rally more and more decisively to a peaceful policy which will allow it to exploit its inner riches more fruitfully.

“The higher we estimate the importance of the credit operation of the French government, the more seriously we must arrive at this universal conviction that France, by contracting the loan, has made vis-à-vis Europe, not only financial commitments, but also political commitments.”

There was honey and vinegar in this article. Alongside well-founded and reasonable assessments, one felt the disappointment of a success as resounding as that of the loan, the regret of being obliged to do justice to the wisdom and recovery of France at the same time as a lesson in German arrogance and pedantry.

The German press, in part at least, expressed itself on this subject with a certain harshness and less disguised hostility. According to a national-liberal newspaper, “the world of capitalists had confidence in the energy with which France would be forced to execute the peace of Frankfurt.”

Another, the *Gazette de la Bourse*, accused “the German speculators of having shown very little patriotism by subscribing large sums to the loan; they should have foreseen, in fact, that French vanity would take advantage of the success of the loan and give up earning a few thalers rather than risk being presented their assistance as a mark of sympathy for France.”

This surly attitude of the German press was not to surprise us; nor should we pay much attention to it.

CHAPTER V

INTERVIEW OF THE EMPERORS from GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND RUSSIA IN BERLIN

Press comments on the origin and purpose of the interview. — Impressions and predictions of some diplomats in Berlin. — Reception at the Austrian Embassy. — Audience granted to M. de Gontaut by the Emperor of Russia. — Party at Potsdam with the Prince Imperial; conversations between M. de Gontaut and Prince Gortchakoff; with Prince Orloff. — Their reassuring words confirmed by a German diplomat. — Concert given at court; conversations of M. de Gontaut with the Emperor of Russia, the Emperor of Austria, the Grand Duke of Baden. — Quips of Prince Bismarck. — Letter from M. de Gontaut to M. de Rémusat: his account of a third interview with Prince Gortchakoff; his conclusions about the interview. — Irritability of Prince Bismarck.

Before arriving at the time when negotiations began again to bring forward the term of liberation fixed by the convention of June 29, I must speak of the meeting between the three emperors of Germany, Austria and Russia which took place in Berlin in September 1872, and the courtesy mission entrusted to me in November to the King and Queen of Saxony, on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary.

As early as June 20, I wrote to Mr. de Rémusat that the arrival of the Austrian Emperor in Berlin had just been officially announced for September 6. He owed a visit to the German

Emperor. "We attach a certain importance to this visit," I told him. We consider, in fact, as probable that, perhaps without signing a treaty, the two Emperors, assisted by their Prime Ministers, will renew the assurances of friendship based on identical interests that they gave each other last year. There will be major maneuvers on this occasion; the visit will last six to seven days."

The following August 2, Mr. de Montgascon, first secretary of the embassy, telegraphed me to Schlangenbad, where I was taking the waters, another no less important news that he had from the very mouth of the Russian embassy counselor, Mr. Arapoff: the Emperor of Russia announced himself in Berlin for September 5 and proposed to extend his stay there until the 12th. He would be accompanied by the Tsarevich, his other son the Grand Duke Wladimir and his brother Grand Duke Nicolas. Count Adlerberg, minister of the household, and the two Counts Schouwaloff, father and son, the first, grand chamberlain, the second, head of the third section, that is to say minister of police, would be part of the personal suite of the Emperor. A military mission was to accompany him, headed by the Minister of War, the aide-de-camp General Milloutine and Field Marshal Count de Berg; it would include, in addition to the officers attached to the imperial persons, general officers of all arms. The presence of the Chancellor of the Empire, Prince Gortchakoff, was not yet announced, but it was more than likely.

As one might well imagine, the purpose of the interview with the powerful Irish Emperors and the origins of this project devastated, from the first day, the press of all Europe, and, more than any other perhaps, the press German.

The unofficial *Provincial Correspondence* of Berlin published, on August 7, an article in which it presented in pompous terms, quite common in the unofficial press, the

meeting of the three monarchs as intended to found, under the auspices of Emperor William , a league of perpetual peace, to be prevented by complications, all the plots that could arise in Europe, that is to say, in reality, to prevent France from one day taking revenge if the idea took hold, and, at the same time, - although the idea was not clearly expressed - to recognize and consecrate the new conquests of Germany.

“The populations of the States concerned,” she said, “welcomed with joy the news of the planned meeting between the three Emperors. The whole world appreciates the importance of this fact...”

“... By the effect of a particularly happy destiny, the meeting of the three Emperors is being prepared at a time when the situation in Europe is absolutely peaceful, the political horizon clear of any cloud, without any appearance of trouble or even a misunderstanding. If the princes come together, it is neither under the influence of a threatening danger, nor under the pressure of any external circumstances. They do not have to concert warlike preparations against common enemies any more than they have to agree on a formal alliance, for a purpose determined and perfectly circumscribed in advance. However, they have the same goal: *the maintenance and consolidation of European peace.*”

By meeting in common thought, not only to cultivate relations of friendship and good neighborliness between their States, but also to prevent, by their influence and by their conciliatory intervention (*sic*), the complications and conflicts which could arise in Europe, the three monarchs show that their policy is directed towards a goal whose pursuit interests other States as much as the countries subject to their expectation laws. It is not with distrust; it is with a favorable impression that Europe takes care of the September festivals. Public opinion was not mistaken; she understood that, in the

current circumstances, the union between Germany, Austria and Russia cannot be anything other than a powerful guarantee for the consolidation of peace and order.

Prussia and the whole of Germany experience a feeling of joyful satisfaction at seeing the venerated person of the Emperor of Germany forming the common bond intended to strengthen the relations of close trust between the three imperial courts. For many years, friendly relations have existed between Russia and Germany, and, in the midst of the vicissitudes of the past, both countries have reaped the advantage.

On the other hand, immediately after the situation in Germany had become clearer, Prussia proposed to re-establish perfect understanding with Austria. The path had already been fortunately paved in this direction, some time before the founding of the German Empire, and the meetings last year, in Gastein and Salzburg, had sealed these good reciprocal dispositions. There may be malicious minds who claim to insinuate that, intimately linked with Russia, Germany cannot contract friendship with Austria, or that understanding between Germany and Austria cannot be understood unless Germany alienates Russia; but such a way of seeing is contradicted by the facts and by the feelings that we know among the statesmen responsible for directing the policy of the three empires. It is indisputable that the project of the government of the German Empire is to maintain the links of perfect harmony between the two great States with which it maintains friendly relations, and to strengthen them ever closer. Today, we have the certainty that this project is well on its way to realization, and that, on both sides, the conduct, both sincere and confident, of Germany has smoothed the ground for a rapprochement between Austria and Russia.

In this sense again, the wish escaped from the mouth of our Emperor William comes true: "The German Empire will be an empire of peace and blessing!"

It was a real program: peace maintained throughout Europe, thanks to the intimate union of the three empires prepared by Germany and to a sort of arbitration exercised by them, understanding re-established between Austria and Russia, by the powerful intervention of Germany, which placed their hands in hers. It was, undoubtedly, a great skill on the part of Prince Bismarck to give his country such a role; It remained to be seen whether Austria and Russia would settle on the one he gave them, and whether the specific interests of each of the three empires could merge into a single interest. Nor was it as proven as the unofficial organ of the German government claimed that Austria and Russia needed Germany to become closer to each other. The implications of the interview were reported by German newspapers.

They pointed out that one could not expect from the three sovereigns an intimacy as cordial as that which Emperor Alexander I, Emperor Francis I and King Frederick William III had given as an example following the great war of 1813 to 1815, but that, France being obviously dissatisfied with the peace of 1871, it was important to avoid serious difficulties arising between these three great States, giving this power the temptation to seek alliances and combinations capable of disturbing the peace of Europe.

As soon as the meeting was announced, a somewhat bitter controversy began between the unofficial newspapers of Germany and Austria on its origins and even on its origins. the role played by Count Andrassy, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It seems to result that the first idea had come from Germany, and that talks would have taken place in Nassau during the inauguration of the statue raised to

Stein. In Vienna, people would have hesitated, they would also have hesitated in Saint Petersburg, for fear of giving the interview the appearance of a demonstration against France.

Some went so far as to say that Prince Bismarck would also have had his hesitations, at a time when the loan of three billion had not yet been made; he would have feared appearing to pose a challenge to France. But what explanation can be given to the presence of Russia, which we had not thought of at first? According to some, the first thought of placing Russia as a third party in the interview came from Count Andrassy. The opportunity seemed opportune to him to bring Austria closer to Russia, and, immediately after Emperor Francis Joseph's resolution to go to Berlin, he sent Archduke William to Saint Petersburg to encourage Emperor Alexander to come there. also, what he would have accepted. According to others, the initiative for the invitation came from Emperor William himself, without the knowledge of Prince Bismarck. After having received notice of the visit of the Emperor of Austria, he wrote to his nephew to urge him to come, pointing out to him that an interview between himself, William, and Franz Joseph alone would seem to in the eyes of Europe of an agreement arranged against Russia. Emperor Alexander would have taken advantage of this advice and announced his visit.

This information was given to me by Baron Notbom, Minister of Belgium in Berlin. (G-B.)

Finally, according to a third version, it was he himself who, upon hearing of the Emperor of Austria's project, decided, on his own initiative, to attend the interview. It will be noted that, in none of these suppositions, the Prince of Bismarck would not have had leaves for the arrival of Emperor Alexander in Berlin.

The purpose of the meeting of the three sovereigns, moreover, had even more importance than the point of knowing whether the Emperor of Russia came of his own free will or by invitation. Without knowing the secrets of the gods, public opinion in France received the news in a relatively calm manner. The entire German press expressed astonishment; some of its organs softened to the point of recognizing that neither Mr. Thiers nor the nation had been too dazzled by the success of the three billion loan, and that France tended rather to postpone than to accentuate his ideas of revenge; but the liberal newspapers allowed a certain spite to emerge by recording the relatively calm assessments of the French press, and they denied the news that the Vienna cabinet had sent reassuring declarations to Versailles on the scope of the interview.

I was then finishing my leave in France and I had to interrupt it to attend this interview. As soon as I returned to Berlin, I contacted my colleagues in the diplomatic corps to gather their information and their impressions. In general, there was a greater willingness to diminish than to enlarge the scope of the interview; it was considered solely as a peaceful demonstration to which the sovereigns wished to give great brilliance, and it was agreed that nothing would be done against France. One of these diplomats supposed, however, that the republican future of France, giving the powers some concern, would naturally be one of the objects of the government's conversation. This opinion reminded me of the words that a very eminent man, Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys, had said to me a few days before my departure from Paris: "Europe was worried, he told me, about a conservative republic or radical in France, of a conservative republic as a dangerous example, of a radical republic as a hotbed of war, of socialism, of upheavals of all kinds."

The Italian minister, Count de Launay, was inclined to believe, as did Baron Nothomb, that no treaty, no convention, nor perhaps any writing whatsoever would emerge; because the interests of these three powers being very different, a fundamental agreement between them would be most difficult; "but," he added, "it is precisely to delay as much as possible the conflicts which could arise from this diversity of interests, it is to convince each other of the high importance of preserving peace in the current state of the Europe, that the meeting was desired and favorably received by these three sovereigns."

With my colleagues from Austria and England, I got more to the heart of the question. Count Karolyi initially protested the peaceful purpose of the meeting of the three Emperors. I replied that I was quite prepared to believe it, but that Germany's intention was undoubtedly to make us feel the isolation of France, and perhaps to obtain a sort of ratification of the political modifications. and territorial, consequences of the last war. "In this last respect," replied Count Karolyi, "there is nothing to be done; it is enough that we remain, on both sides, on the same terms as we have been for a year and a half. In February 1871, we did not raise our voice against the conditions of peace, and you know that since then we have continued to maintain good relations with Germany. This implies, it is true, a recognition of fact and form, but it is not part of the thinking of our governments to go beyond. I can assure you that there will be nothing written. We will exchange views on pending issues, on ways to extend and guarantee peace, on the maintenance of the union between the courts, but neither treaties nor protocols will follow, and you know the proverb: *Verba volant scripta manent!*"

The ambassador also let me understand that, for Prince Bismarck, the interview was to have the meaning of a demonstration against the warlike ulterior motives of France

and the intention that Mr. Gambetta might have, if he came to power, to take advantage of our military reorganization, a double concern shared to a certain point by all of Europe, and which could be one of the subjects of the cabinet discussions, without us having much to be surprised by. This point of view had been presented to me many times already with more or less sincerity, depending on the choice of my interlocutors. I fought it with the same clarity as usual, adding only that, if it was natural, even useful, to take public opinion into account, it was, it seemed to me, on the part of men of State, submit too easily to its demands than to prepare demonstrations such as the interview of the three powerful monarchs; and I saw with regret a statesman, such as Count Andrassy, giving way to fear of our so-called armaments.

In another interview with a member of the Federal Council of Germany, to whom I pointed out the more than disparaging tone of an article in the Provincial Correspondence about the anniversary of Sedan, I showed how little Germany put of his own in the work of pacification. "You will agree with me," I said to him, "that there has been significant progress in the public spirit in France over the past year. You see us taking out a large loan to pay the war indemnity, and we are sparing no effort to pay you; now would be the time to show yourself satisfied. On the contrary, your unofficial journals only express themselves in the tone of threat."

Mon colleague from England, he seemed more concerned about the conversations that could take place between the three northern sovereigns on the Eastern question, than even about the peaceful demonstration against France. It was noted that, throughout the interview, his attitude was very reserved.

From everything I heard and observed, I therefore believed myself authorized to conclude that the points which would form the subject of the conversations of the sovereigns and their ministers would be the following: warning to be given to France of its isolation, in the event where desires for future revenge would emerge in her, either through the feeling of her resurgent strength, or as a result of the advent of the revolutionary party; Eastern Question; strengthening of their peaceful relations between the three powers; exchange of views on the measures to be prepared against the International.

In any case, the most brilliant celebrations followed one another throughout the duration of the interview, concerts and a grand dinner at court, a gathering in Potsdam with the prince imperial, reception at the Austrian Embassy in honor of Emperor Franz Joseph. It was with the latter that they began. I copy my notes:

September 7, 1872. This evening, the diplomatic corps was presented to the Emperor of Austria-Hungary in his ambassador's palace. None of the heads of mission missed the call, except the Minister of Portugal, Count de Rivas, who was kept at home due to illness, and the Minister of Switzerland, Mr. Hammer, who was absent from Berlin. The ambassadors were received separately by the Emperor, each according to their rank of seniority and accompanied by their staff. The Emperor stood, with Count Karolyi at his side, waiting for us in a separate room. After being introduced to him by his ambassador, I had the honor of naming the secretaries and attachés of my embassy, the Baron de Montgascon, the Prince of Polignac, military attaché, M. Debains, Count R. de Kergorlay and M. de Bacourt. His slender height, his gentle, a little sad and still young face give him charm. He seems shy. He asked me for news about Mr.

Thiers, then about his artillery experiences; he said few things, moreover. He addressed, in a tone of benevolence, an 'A or two sentences to each of the members of the embassy, and, after a few minutes, he dismissed us. He then went to the grand ballroom, where the entire diplomatic corps formed a circle, and, after stopping for a moment near each one, he bowed with good grace and withdrew.

Count Andrassy approached me, and the Russian ambassador, M. d'Oubril, named us one after the other. Count Andrassy has a very strongly accentuated Hungarian type, with marked features; he looks quite young, curly hair, abundant and brown. I thanked him for coming to my house that morning, and I told him that we had remembered him in Paris, that several of my friends had spoken to me about him, that one among others, the Duke of Maillé, had instructed me to call him back to him when I met him. The count replied to me that in fact he had been treated with great kindness in Paris, that he had frequently seen all of French society there, the La Rochefoucaulds among others. We hardly exchanged any other words and he seemed to avoid any political subject. All these foreigners are already so exhausted from the party life they are made to lead that they are a little bewildered. This presentation looked a little sad. We spoke very quietly. The Emperor of Austria seemed embarrassed and tired. Poor prince! There was probably no one in this great meeting who understood it better than me! We see that this visit to Berlin, to the winner of Sadowa, is a tough sacrifice for him. It was politics that demanded it. He did not want to refuse it to his country or to his ministers. What fruit will he get from it? This is the secret of the future.

The next morning, Emperor Franz Joseph did my house; but, in accordance with etiquette, my door was closed. The same day I had an audience with the Emperor of Russia.

His Majesty was kind enough to give me the kindest welcome. He first asked me for news of M Thiers. "I saw him several times," he told me, especially in unhappy times, when he came to Petersburg with such courage and patriotism. I have the greatest esteem for him and I express the most sincere wishes for his good health, for the strengthening of his government and for the prosperity of France. Please tell him for me. Please, he added, emphasizing his words, assure him that he has absolutely nothing to fear from what happened here. He could also count on it: I told General Le Flô so, but you can repeat it to him. France could be certain in advance that I would not have participated in anything that could be attempted against it! It will be easy to understand that this language made a happy enough impression on me for it to be faithfully engraved in my memory; I also transcribe the notes that I took after my hearing.

On that day and the following days, I saw quite a large number of political personages, and, generally, I gathered satisfactory impressions from my conversations with them. On the evening of the 8th, there was a big gathering at the New Palace, in Potsdam, at the Prince Imperial's house. Very beautiful and extensive illumination in the gardens, great competition of princes and great people. I got to know the Russians, Prince Gortchakoff, Prince Orloff, Baron de Jomini, one of the principal agents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. Their language was very sympathetic to France: they showed me a certain eagerness contrasting with the very cold attitude of the Austro-Hungarians. I was informed that the Chancellor of Russia was looking for me; I went to meet him and we immediately entered into conversation on a cordial basis. I expressed to him the importance I attached to getting in touch with him. He answered me in the same tone. I did not fail to tell him that I had been very touched by the welcome

given to me that very morning by the Emperor of Russia and very satisfied with the language he had kindly addressed to me.

"In this case," replied Prince Gortchakoff, "I need neither repeat nor emphasize it; This is, you can believe, the very exact meaning of the feelings of the Russian government. We have interest and sympathy for France — hear it clearly, I only say: France!", and the accent with which he underlined this word could give rise to more than one interpretation. Then, after a pause: "It seems to me," he added very simply, "that you are arriving at a state of conservative republic. We do not intend to interfere in your internal affairs and we will recognize any government that you see fit to give you. But I said a word to Mr. Thiers which apparently pleased him, because I read it two days later in the newspaper *Le Bien public*. Europe needs a strong and wise France. I don't deny it. It is important that France be strong, so that it plays the role assigned to it in the world; but she must be wise, precisely to play this role with authority and for her action to be beneficial."

"You see," I replied to the prince, "that we are walking in the path you indicate; France is regaining its vitality. Its industrial and financial strength is reappearing. The success of our loan is proof of this. The appeasement of minds and tranquility are making significant progress. The general councils end their session: they are very important cogs for the management of the affairs of the country. All, with one or two exceptions, confined themselves within the circle of their attributions and their work, gave the example of calm and respect for the law. Order is restored. France is therefore becoming strong again as well as wise, to its greatest advantage and that of Europe, as you say yourself. The very sensible policy that you have practiced since the Paris Congress, and which you formulated with these words: Russia

collects its thoughts, must be our model. We imitate you and we work on our inner reorganization to regain our strength, as you have recovered it yourself."

Prince Gortchakoff seemed sensitive to this memory. He then reminded me of the satisfactory state of Russia's relations with France until 1863. "At that time," he said, "this unfortunate affair occurred which put a chill between our two countries.

Allusion to the great revolt which broke out in Russian Poland in the month of January 1863, and to the diplomatic support lent to him by Napoleon III. It was even possible to believe for a moment that he would bring Austria into an alliance against Russia for the restoration of Polish unity under the scepter of an archduke. Everything was reduced to simple protests which had no other result than to leave in the hearts of the Russians a deep resentment against France. This was one of the causes of our disasters in 1870.

In 1867, I wanted to have explanations on this subject with the Emperor Napoleon III. I asked him what in his eyes were the causes of conflict which he believed could seriously threaten peace in Europe. His Majesty designated three to me. We immediately met in a sort of conference, Mr. Rouher, Count Bismarck and I, to examine them and, at the end of our discussion, we were able to tell the Emperor that we believed we had found the means of dismissal to his satisfaction. But three years had barely passed before the French government decided on this disastrous war!"

Despite the interest of this interview, we could not continue in the middle of the comings and goings and the hubbub of the party, and we agreed, the Chancellor of Russia and I, to meet one of the next days at one of our homes. As

we were parting, the prince pointed out to me the courtesies exchanged between the great people of Austria and Germany, and, after saying a few kind words to me about my position in Berlin, he added in a sarcastic tone: "You see that from Prussians to Austrians it is easy to forget insults!"

A few moments later, I met Baron de Jomini, one of the main confidants of the Chancellor of Russia. He did not hesitate, despite the place where he found himself, to judge the men and the politics of Prussia with a familiar liveliness of language which did not fail to surprise me a little. And, as I told him only a few words about the supposition that Germany would have wished to obtain from Russia and Austria the ratification of the conquest, he protested, saying that Germany could not ask for it, that it had not done so and that, moreover, neither Russia nor Austria would have accepted this proposal.

Prince Orloff, Russian ambassador in Paris, with whom I spoke at length that same evening, expressed himself in a sense identical to Baron de Jomini and with even greater clarity if that is possible. Already the day before, he had met one of our military attachés, Count Henri de La Ferronnays, and he had had a conversation with him of which he had instructed him, with very marked insistence, to report to me the terms which could not be more accurate. So as not to lose anything, Mr. de La Ferronnays hastened to write them down, and saying he was certain of his memory, he read me the following:

"Please tell Viscount de Gontaut as soon as possible that until 'here the name of France has not been pronounced, and that, if it were to be pronounced, it would be on the part of Russia and Austria with all the sympathy and respect that your country deserves. Mr. Thiers had feared that the current meeting would provoke a European congress intended to sanction the results of the war, and he declared to me his

desire not to take part in it. I made known to him, from then on, my feelings about the impossibility of such a proposal. Today, I have the opinion on this subject that the Emperor of Austria expressed to me yesterday and which confirms my predictions; no diplomatic act aimed at recognizing the annexations accomplished will be proposed and would not be accepted. Russia and Austria do not want and cannot intervene in this issue. Prussia started the war without consulting the other European states. She had the chance to be victorious, and she used her victory according to her will, without seeking the assent of Russia and Austria; she acted at her own risk. What war has given him, war can take away; she has conquered, whether she is conquered in turn, that does not concern us!"

The prince always spoke the same language to me and was constantly sympathetic to France and to M. Thiers, whom he promised to go see immediately on his return to Paris. Continuing our conversation, he came to tell me about Count Andrassy and the success he obtained with the Emperors and their ministers; it would be, on the part of the Russian chancellor, in particular, a sort of enthusiasm that he, Orloff, was far from sharing. It is certain that Prince Gortchakoff and Count Andrassy saw each other frequently during their stay in Berlin; what is no less obvious is that intimacy was formed between the Emperor of Russia and the Emperor of Austria, at the same time as between the two ministers.

Despite all the peaceful assurances I received, I still could not help fearing that the interview would result in the establishment of an intimate concert for the future in the relations of the three empires or in their political action vis-à-vis foreign countries. A German diplomat, of fairly serious authority, thought he could allay my fears in this regard by pointing out to me that, at all times, Russia had retained, in its

foreign relations, an independence which it did not appear to have. ready to abdicate. At the same time, he confirmed to me a fact that reliable information had already made known to me. Russia and Austria would have expressed to Germany, in very friendly terms, moreover, the value they attached to seeing it inspire a spirit of moderation in its relations with France, and show itself as conciliatory as possible in the negotiations intended to complete the execution of the stipulations of the Peace of Frankfurt. I do not know the terms which the two courts would have used in their communication, but I am prepared to believe that they provided the German government with language consistent with these indications. Moreover, I was also assured that Prince Bismarck had said: "France would be wrong to worry; nothing here could offend him."

I have already said that it was easy to observe a difference between the dispositions of the Russians and the Austrians; this difference was explainable. The Austrians were linked in many ways to Germany and could not therefore have, in European politics and vis-à-vis France in particular, the same independence as Russia. Count Andrassy seemed to avoid me, while the Russian statesmen sought me out with a certain external affability which struck the Emperor William, because, seeing me talking at the gathering with Prince Gortchakoff, he said to us: "How, Gentlemen! still in business?" "The Emperor Alexander had indeed consented to certain arrangements with Prussia during the war of 1870; but,

We know that Russia, in exchange for its neutrality, obtained, with the complicity of Prussia, the cancellation of the articles of the Treaty of Paris which prohibited his fleets from entering the Black Sea.

the increase of power obtained by the latter, the development in particular of its navy, which almost dwarfed that of Russia in the Baltic Sea, aroused the jealousies of Muscovite pride, and the Emperor was obliged to take this feeling into account at the same time only sympathies awakened in his country for the cause of France. At the concert given on the 10th, at court, this sovereign was kind enough to speak to me again with marked kindness. It reminded me of the French officers who, on various occasions, accepted service in the Russian army. He impressed upon me, once again, his particular esteem for Mr. Thiers; but at the same time, he allowed a certain anxiety to emerge about the future of France under the republican form. "I told Mr. Thiers in October 1870," the Tsar told me: "France is not republican."

I reported all these conversations to Messrs. Thiers and de Rémusat in my dispatches and my private letters, and, after having cited these words of the Emperor Alexander, I wrote, on September 11: a My observations on the conservative guarantees with which the government sought to surround itself have appeared tasted by His Imperial Majesty. But we must not hide from the fact that the concerns expressed by the Emperor of Russia are generally shared among the people gathered here."

The Emperor of Austria, moreover, made several remarks to me which I received with satisfaction. This is how, after speaking to me at this same concert about the benefits of peace, he told me that it was good to reorganize our army as we were doing. He added: "Peace is desirable for everyone, even for the people here!" The rest of our conversation proved to me that the Emperor saw better than no one the difficulties which the German Empire encountered in its organization, and the great embarrassments of the religious question so imprudently aroused by the Chancellor.

These two conversations with the two emperors of Russia and Austria were long enough to arouse the attention of the courtiers; They seemed struck, even a little upset - I was told later - by the kindness and consideration they showed to the representative of France. And, however, the most Prussian of German princes, the Grand Duke of Baden, came, a few minutes later, to speak to me with a good grace almost equal to that of the two Emperors. He was the first in Germany to wage war against clerical and Catholic influences in particular. I therefore experienced some surprise when I found him very concerned about achieving a revival of religious ideas in his country and when I listened to him develop the theme of strong Christian beliefs to oppose to the drying tendencies of modern rationalism. "We must," he said, "use the brakes of religion against the deplorable doctrines of the International, the scourge of all modern States and societies. "I was too much of the same opinion to interrupt him, and I did not contradict him further when he added these words, obviously sincere on his part, at the same time as they were the watchword of his father-in-law. Emperor William: "This is the only war we should wage in Europe!" Then expanding on the benefits of peace, he invited me to be absolutely reassured about what was happening in Berlin at the time we were there. This language struck me all the more as Prince Bismarck obviously took special care to avoid any conversation with me. He was also in a very bad mood, complaining about this crowd of princes and the whole procession of diplomats that they were dragging in their wake.

Everyone was able to notice the embarrassment of his language with regard to the sovereigns of the secondary German States who are in procession to the grandeur of the new empire. They, in turn, experience some offense. Only one, however, did not hide his mood: it was the young King

Ludwig II of Bavaria. He would have complained about the Prince Imperial's lack of procedure when he came to inspect the Bavarian troops. Prussia nevertheless remains, without any appearance of serious contradiction, the absolute mistress in all that concerns German policy. The erased role of all the German princes, at the time of the visit of the two Emperors to the court of Berlin, does not allow us to maintain any doubt about this situation.

On September 10, there was a grand concert at court. The circle was numerous and brilliant. All the members of the sovereign houses were in a separate room. At half past nine, we opened the doors of the door which separated them from the living room where we were all gathered, ambassadors, ministers, German princes, ordinary guests, and the procession of princes paraded, going to the Round Room, where the concert was prepared. The Empress led the way by arming the two emperors of Austria and Russia. She did so in every meeting. Then came the Emperor of Germany, Princess Charles of Prussia, the old Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, sister of the Emperor, etc.

Around the Empress's table were the two foreign Emperors, the Duchess of Mecklenburg, the Grand Duchess of Baden, and the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, brother of the Empress. I was at the table of the Imperial Princess, next to Count Andrassy, in the company of the Chancellor of Russia, Baroness Schleinitz, Princess Schoenbourg (of Saxony), Princess Hatzfeldt, née Dietrichstein, and the Ambassador of England. The ambassadors of Austria and Russia were at another table. In the intermission, I asked Lord Russell if he knew anything, and I told him what I had been told that morning about the friendly invitation extended to Germany by the Austria and Russia, to maintain easy and conciliatory relations with France, which would confirm the remark

attributed to Prince Bismarck, which I reported above. I added that in summary, in my opinion, Germany would not be without some setbacks from the interview, despite certain advantages.

"I believe it all the more willingly," replied Lord Russell, "because yesterday evening, here, after the court dinner, Prince Bismarck, with a slightly bright eye, approached me, and, almost all at once, said to me: I wanted to bring together these three Emperors here, to pose them like statues, the three Graces, and to show them like that! Andrassy "is charming and full of intelligence. As for that old fool Gortchakofi, he gets on my nerves with his white tie and his intellectual pretensions! He had brought here very white paper, very black ink, brought scribes and he wanted to write!... But I didn't hear from that ear. Then he disappeared."

This language obviously betrays the mood that everyone who sees Prince Bismarck indicates in him. Is he very sincere? I doubt it, because he attributes to Prince Gortchakoff intentions to write absolutely contrary to what I know, I believe, from a good source, and to what the prince himself told me.

The English ambassador said to me again: "The more I observe, the more I am confirmed in the thought that it was the Emperor Alexander who presented himself to the interview, without having been invited in principle, and Bismarck was very upset." (G.-B.)

Someone high up told me. "Be reassured about what has been done here; everything is favorable to peace. But, added this same person, Bismarck is more nervous and in a worse mood than ever!"; and, as I attributed it to her nerve's sickness, she shook her head and said: "That's more what happens in a man overwhelmed by fortune; he gets drunk and loses his mind."

The Empress spoke to me about the Emperor of Austria, whom she is seeing for the first time and whom she finds, like me, extremely sympathetic.

The sovereigns left Berlin on September 12; the interview was over. I then wrote to the minister a long letter in which I reported on a very interesting last conversation with the Chancellor of Russia, and where I summarized my impressions of the interview. Here are some extracts:

Berlin, September 14, 1872.

Prince Gortchakoff offered me a meeting yesterday before his departure. I found him in the same mood as during our first two interviews, chatting with a verve and an abundance whose tone fortunately contrasts with that of German statesmen. Much of this conversation was devoted to France, with the Chancellor repeating, confirming and expanding on what Emperor Alexander himself had told me.

"So I will tell you what we have done here," began the prince. Well! you have no reason to worry, far from it. We were unanimous in recognizing the progress of order and tranquility in France. "We sincerely congratulate you on the good administration of Mr. Thiers, on the excellent direction he gives to the policy of your country. Please express my admiration to him.

I thought I could ask the prince very simply what we should think of Prince Bismarck's dispositions towards us. "Prince Bismarck," he said to me, smiling, his health is very poor, his nerves are a little excited and the Emperor of Germany has told me about it; but, believe it, Germany is in good dispositions towards you, as good as you can wish, having regard to the present state of things. Wait for what is asked of you the entire execution of the "Treaty of Frankfurt." *You must carry it out*, but here, we are very satisfied with the efforts of Mr. Thiers to fulfill France's commitments. —

Certainly, I replied, Germany cannot formulate either complaints or reproaches. You are witness to the correction that we “put in fulfilling our commitments. We make our payments in advance, and we have collected from our call for credit a large sum which is intended entirely for Germany. —It is very true, said the prince to me; be reassured and reassure Mr. Thiers if necessary. “I will not tell you that here, and even in other countries, we do not experience certain offences from such and such articles in your newspapers. He sees certain “aggressive” tendencies there, but we don’t have to stop there. “Shall I tell you about your army and its reorganization? “You know well that we do not remain indifferent to it, but on this point, Germany has no right to address any observations to you. You do what you think is right and you are right. I told you, and I like to repeat it, we need a strong France.

“I was sitting the other day with Marshal de Moltke, and he pointed out to me that these great armies of Europe were something frightening; to which I replied: “But wouldn’t it be up to you to set the example of disarmament? “You know well,” continued the prince, turning to me, “that when it comes to the army, Prussia cannot fail to be attentive, but it does not go beyond that.”

“You know,” I said to him, “that at the beginning, we had some apprehension on only one point: Germany could think of asking all great powers in Berlin from dedicate the changes made “to the territorial state of Europe since the last war. “She didn’t do it,” the prince replied, “and I don’t even believe she had the intention of doing it.” Then he added in a way to convince me: “I repeat, there was an exchange of views and ideas, but no protocol was held. We separate without there being anything written between us. Be sure to let your government know.”

“Prince Gortchakoff had not yet commented on certain suppositions which might have been discussed here, with regard to France and its future. I got him to do it.

“As long as you have Mr. Thiers,” he said to me, “I expect to see the conservative republic among you. “After him, it becomes doubtful;” and he told me a few words about the radical actions and Mr. Gambetta.

“Yes,” I continued, “we can apprehend a crisis the day when a certain eventuality to be foreseen would bring about a change in the person of the head of government,” but it frightens me less when I note the incessant progress of the mind. conservative. Republic or monarchy, the government of France will remain conservative; we can surely predict this, seeing the increasingly obvious distancing of all classes of the population from revolutionary or gambetist solutions. — So much the better, said the prince to me, I am very happy with these assurances. You can be sure that we have no desire to interfere in your internal affairs, and, moreover, what can we do about it? Today, we are no longer in the time of Emperor Nicholas We are no longer so difficult about the very fact of the recognition of governments. We recognize all those who have the consecration of the *fait accompli*, but he added, with a pretty strong intention; I am not telling you that we are indifferent to the government that States can give themselves, especially when it concerns a great power, and France in particular. I will say it again to you: “we want a wise France and we know what it matters to Europe.”

Such was the conversation whose appearance I sought to depict.

And now I would like, in conclusion, to summarize the impressions that the Berlin interview left on me.

What can we infer from this in relation to the powers gathered here? What should we think about it for France?

With regard to the former, the capital fact, everyone recognizes, is the very significant rapprochement which has taken place between Austria and Russia.

The first meeting between these sovereigns was, I have been assured, quite cold and a little embarrassed. Emperor Alexander could hardly forget, in fact, the alliance formed between Austria and the Western powers, which had a great influence on the outcome of the Crimean War and the news of which caused such deep irritation to his father that it is said to have brought about his death; but, through good grace, Emperor Franz Joseph would not have taken long to dissipate these old prejudices, and true cordiality would have been established between the two sovereigns. It was relaxation between the two countries, it was the rapprochement between the courts of Saint Petersburg and Vienna. This was perhaps the most considerable result of the Berlin interview. (G.-B.)

It is the work of the two Emperors and their prime ministers, and, more particularly, that of the Emperor of Austria and Count Andrassy. What part did Germany take in this reconciliation? She certainly has one. I believe that she wanted it and facilitated it, although the initiative for the interview did not belong to her, in my opinion and in that of more than one diplomat.

But it is not to his influence alone that the greatest part should be attributed. The two Emperors met and they are agreed. It was the same for Prince Gortchakoff and Count Andrassy, who appear to have explained themselves frankly to each other, and who realized, once personal prejudices had fallen, that their internal embarrassments demanded almost all

their concern and certainly demanded more serious solutions than the points of policy which they share.

I have said, many times already, that if it was part of Germany's military habits to always be ready for war, she had no desire to wage war at present, and that all her interests were moving towards peace today. Everything therefore authorizes me to think that world peace has drawn new guarantees from the meeting of the three sovereigns... It would be an exaggeration to say that the détente that occurred in Berlin made the dissidences arising from different views disappear forever of Austria and Russia in the East; but it is reasonable to believe that the chances of conflicts between them are temporarily ruled out. This is, moreover, the almost general opinion in the diplomatic corps in Berlin.

I wonder, secondly, if France has reason to worry about the consequences of the Berlin interview for itself. I am far from believing it. Germany has spoken a lot in principle about the certainly peaceful aim of the meeting of the three Emperors.

However, I hesitate to believe that she got everything she wanted. Without aiming at an act precisely hostile to France, it sought, in a very intimate and very cordial meeting of the three most powerful sovereigns of the continent, a demonstration whose significance would turn a little to the confusion of France. Whatever else she may say, she would have seen with a certain pride the sovereigns recognizing by an explicit act the territorial changes which occurred as a result of the last war.

Did she succeed on these two points? I do not think so. Russia and Austria itself believe that France is necessary for Europe. They are of the opinion that France has suffered enough, and they wish to encourage it in the successful efforts it is making to recover, witness the praise given by the

emperors Alexander and Francis Joseph and by the chancellor of the Russian empire to the reorganization of our army. Prince Gortchakoff spoke to the English ambassador in the same way as to me: "Europe needs a strong France." Lord Odo Russell repeated this to me himself, adding that this was also the English way of seeing. So here are Russia, Austria and England saying out loud that for the rest of Europe we need a powerful France. They hadn't said it yet since our ordeals. Had they not retained some jealousy of the situation in France? Where can it come from that they say it today, if it is not that Germany's conquests and its somewhat insolent pride are beginning to give them umbrage, that they foresee the enlargement of Germany as a threat to themselves, and that they realize that France, as well as Austria, are necessary to counterbalance the Germanic empire, necessary for European balance?

Russia and Austria, to speak only of the powers present at the meeting, therefore want a strong France and Germany wants a weak France. This is a capital difference between the policies of the three powers, which Germany, whatever it does, will be obliged to take into account.

Since its victories, the press of this country has treated the idea of a European balance with disdain; she no longer wants it because she aims for preponderance for herself. No one dared to pronounce this word anymore since the incredible misfortunes of France, and here it reappears in the language of politics. Let's not yet say that it is a victory for our country; it is at least proof that justice is beginning to be done to him.

I do not want to draw the consequence that our alliance is sought again; France is not there yet, but it is recovering with a speed and vigor which frighten some and delight others, which gives food for thought to all. If, by regaining her

strength, she becomes wise again, she will certainly inspire confidence and people will come to seek her alliance.

Germany fears this awakening of France and would have liked that, far from encouraging it, Europe, agreeing with its views, would take a certain umbrage at it; She did not completely find the agreement she hoped for with her two neighbors on this point. It is in this sense that it is reasonable to believe, in my opinion, that Germany did not get from the meeting everything it wanted. Far be it from me, moreover, to claim that the union between Germany and Austria is not strengthened in this circumstance, I think the opposite. But I also think that this agreement is not a threat to France, if France is wise.

Two facts generally stood out, which I must not omit to complete the picture of the last week.

The attitude of all the Russians, from the chancer to the officers who came here to follow the military maneuvers, was quite haughty towards the Germans; towards the French, it was marked by cordiality.

I have already raised some concerns with the English embassy, upon learning that the Eastern Question could be one of the subjects dealt with in the interview. He told me himself that we were not very well disposed in Berlin towards England, and everyone noticed a certain coldness in the attitude of Lord Odo Russell at court during the holidays.

These were the impressions I gathered from the interview with the Emperors in Berlin. Mr. de Rémusat was kind enough to let me know the observations which had been transmitted to him on this subject by some of our diplomatic agents.

The impressions of our ambassador in Petersburg, the excellent General Le Flô, to whom the Emperor of Russia and his chancellor had spoken before their departure for Berlin,

were in every way similar to mine. He said, in addition, that the Russians had left Berlin quite offended by the keener and more marked sympathies to which the Emperor of Austria would have been the object from the official world and even from the Berlin population. He added that reconciliation between Austria and Russia was very well received in Petersburg.

Following the Count of Vogué, French ambassador to Constantinople, the grand vizier, Midhat-Pasha, to whom he pointed out that the results of the Berlin meeting did not show any aggressive character towards France, assured him that his personal information confirmed this assessment.

Finally, a very capable man, who was currently managing French affairs in Vienna, Baron de Ring, began by reporting to the minister the ovation which Emperor Franz Joseph had received on his return. of Berlin, as if to thank him for having repressed bitter feelings before deciding to go to Prussia, and for having thereby given new consecration to the good and advantageous relations existing between the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the empire German. The same day, he had seen Count Andrassy, who had told him about his trip, but with very little emphasis on the political side. He only told him that I was well regarded at the Prussian court and that the President of the Republic must be satisfied with the terms in which His Majesty had expressed himself while chatting for a long time with me. Count Andrassy made him understand that the Berlin interview had been only the consecration of a pre-existing state of affairs, that it had introduced no new element in European politics, except that it was hoped that, from now on, relations between Austria and Russia would be easier and more confident.

In general, Count Andrassy seemed more satisfied with Russia than with Prussia. Mr. de Ring said he was justified in

believing that the religious question had been brought up by Prince Bismarck and that there had been no agreement on this. Count Andrassy added in his own words, on this subject, that Prince Bismarck, once so independent, was *beginning to sacrifice popularity in a regrettable manner*, and he followed this remark with fairly free overviews of the internal politics of Prussia.

Did the meeting of the three Emperors have a secret part? It's possible. I had warned Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat several times that it had come to my attention that the sovereigns were concerned about the future of France, and that they feared revolutionary explosions there, hence it was at least permissible to draw the conclusion that, if these eventualities occurred, they were prepared to meet and advise. The President and the minister had always remained silent on my warnings. But, at the onset of winter, on October 20, Mr. de Rémusat wrote to me confidentially: "It has come back to me through a diplomatic source that by showing a lot of confidence in our current government, the three Emperors, in Berlin, would have explained themselves more formally than has been said on the hypothesis of a Gambettist turnaround in France. Nothing positive would have been stopped, however; but we would have promised, if necessary, to understand and consult each other. See, he added, if you can find out what is true in this budding coalition."

It is very difficult to be exactly informed about a secret treaty. But the conformity of similar information, coming from different sides, made it very probable the existence of certain conventions about which the sovereigns kept secret.

Before closing this subject, I will recount a trait of the violent character of Prince Bismarck. I have this from several sources, including from one of my most senior colleagues.

During the interview, he came in the evening to pay a visit to one of the ambassadors, and he did not hide his irritation against the Emperor who, he said, only cared about his soldiers and not a another matter. It was around this time that the scene took place between him and M. de Thile which led to the latter's retirement. Here, he said, are the exact reasons which I copy on my notes. Prince Bismarck, already dissatisfied with the presence of the Emperor of Russia and all his entourage, at the interview in Berlin, wanted to give M. d'Oubril, Russian ambassador, only the great cross of the Red Eagle or something equivalent, but nothing more. Count Karolyi would have been treated the same. Mr. de Thile brought these proposals to the King, in his capacity as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The King found these distinctions insufficient and wanted to confer on the two ambassadors the Black Eagle, the most important of the Prussian orders, and the one which is given the most rarely. Despite some objections from Mr. de Thile, His Majesty held firm: the decree was drawn up immediately and signed by the King.

Returning to the ministry, Mr. de Thile went to Prince Bismarck to inform him of the King's resolutions. But whether the prince was out or confined at home, he could not see him. The day advanced, and the Secretary of State then deemed it appropriate to send to the two ambassadors the news of the favor granted to them by the King, so that they could thank him that same evening in the big circle. A little later, M. de Bismarck sent for M. de Thile, and, learning from him that not only had the Emperor modified his proposals, but that the ambassadors had already received official notification of the royal good grace, he entered into a violent anger, sharply apostrophized, - rudely, it is said, - M. de Thile, reproaching him for his usual clumsiness. Mr. de Thile, justly injured,

declared to the Chancellor that until then he had only remained in the ministry out of devotion, but that in the face of such treatment he would resign. "It is accepted," replied Prince Bismarck, and M. de Thile left. The Emperor, of course, learned what had happened between Bismarck and Thile; he was personally hurt and made every effort to get Mr. de Thile to reverse his resignation, but in vain. The Emperor suggested that he remain available, in order to confer on him an embassy at the first opportunity. Mr. de Thile would have replied, I am assured, that he no longer wanted, at any price and under any title whatsoever, to be under the orders of Prince Bismarck.

This permanent irritability in the Chancellor, his disagreements with the Emperor and his very disrespectful remarks towards him, just as towards the Empress, are no longer a mystery to anyone. He left again, a few days after the interview, for Varzin, from where he does not intend to return before January. He doesn't even have it considered it appropriate to go out of his way to attend the funeral of Prince Albert, younger brother of the Emperor, who died around this time, and he does not intend to accompany his sovereign for the golden wedding of the king and queen of Saxony, in Dresden, where, however, the Emperor of Austria, it is said, and other great personages, perhaps, are also to come.

Since I am on this chapter, I will be allowed to continue copying my notes on the bad humor of this man whom the pride and the intoxication of his high fortune, - according to a great personage, - exalt just as much as the excitements of his nervous system. From two different sides, from France and Germany, it came back to me that my return from France for the interview with the sovereigns and the good grace which I received from the emperors of Austria and Russia, as well as some people around them, had made the Chancellor very impatient, and that, perhaps, I would thereby have become an

object of umbrage for him. Lord Odo Russell did not hide from me the coldness which reigned between his government and that of Germany, on the occasion of France, in part. Mr. de Bismarck was very dissatisfied, first of all, with the meeting, quite fortuitous moreover, of the Prince of Wales with the President of the Republic at Trouville; secondly Keu, from the rather accentuated toast, it is true, of Commander Vansittart, of the British navy, during the visit of the English vessels to the coasts of Normandy;

On the occasion of a visit to Le Havre, made by Mr. Thiers, on September 14, ships from the English navy and the American navy came anchor in the harbor to greet the President. The next day, the officers of the English squadron received on board the civil and military authorities of Le Havre, and Commander Vansittart made a toast to France and the President. — As for the meeting of the Prince of Wales and Mr. Thiers, in August, on the beach of Trouville, she had appeared unexpectedly, during a walk.

finally and above all, the Chancellor does not forgive England for the commercial treaty she is going to make with France, because, in all probability, Belgium and Italy will have their hands forced, and, consequently, the Austria will no longer be able to resist. Moreover, direct communications between Varzin and Pesth take place without interruption. Mr. de Keudell, sent to Constantinople as German ambassador, stopped at length with Count Andrassy. Everything proves the intimacy of current relations between Germany and Austria, and this intimacy continues to preoccupy the English ambassador with regard to the Eastern question.

CHAPTER VI

EXTRAORDINARY MISSION TO DRESDEN

Question of the diplomatic representation of France to the secondary states of Germany. — Will M. de Gontaut attend the golden wedding of the King and Queen of Saxony and in what capacity? — Conversations on this subject with the Minister of Belgium and the Minister of Saxony in Berlin. — Solution adopted by the French government. — Arrival of M. de Gontaut in Dresden; regulation of his title and rank. — Audience of the king and queen of Saxony. — Question of precedence. — The religious ceremony of the golden wedding. — Conversation with the Royal Prince of Saxony. — Confidences collected by M. de Gontaut on the feelings of the court of Saxony towards Prussia. — Mission result.

The fiftieth anniversary of the marriage of the king and queen of Saxony, which was to be celebrated on November 9, 1872, was to bring together in Dresden most of the princes belonging to the sovereign houses of Germany, the Emperor and the Empress and the prince imperial at the head, as well as envoys from almost all of Europe. Should France be represented there? under what conditions and by whom would it be done? These were the questions that the President of the Republic asked himself and which gave rise to a fairly active correspondence between our Minister of Foreign Affairs and me.

It is certain that our situation was delicate. If, in law, it was the same as that of all the other States living in peace and in relations with Germany, in fact, we had just been its adversaries and defeated adversaries, and all our actions, even the most correct, particularly aroused the mistrust of the German government.

The question of diplomatic representation to German states other than the seat of the empire was poorly defined, and Prince Bismarck had applied his efforts to making it politically useless, by having the Constitution decree that the direction of the Germany's foreign policy should belong to the Emperor, and his ambassadors and ministers would have the privilege of representing all German sovereigns to foreign states. Bavaria was the only exception to this rule. It followed that, if certain powers still accredited representatives to the secondary states of Germany, this must no longer be anything more than a matter of courtesy; They had also, in general, entrusted this mission to ambassadors or ministers already accredited to the Emperor. But it could also be an opportunity to exert influence, and this is what the Chancellor wanted to avoid, thinking especially of France.

All French missions in Germany had been withdrawn as expected when the war broke out. Once the struggle was over, was it appropriate to resume official relations with the various German courts, on the same footing as the other states of Europe? Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat had the desire; but, as I said earlier, it was a delicate question to decide. However, shortly after my arrival in Berlin, I was tasked with testing the waters; I had several conversations on this subject with ministers of the small courts, and I will have the opportunity to speak about it later in this story. In any case, at the time we are in, the question had not been resolved, partly due to the fault of the French government which showed, in this regard, a timidity that was not encouraged not certainly the imperial chancellery, partly due to the small German states which were torn in different directions by the keen desire to have a diplomatic representative of France, on the one hand, and, on the other, by the fear greater than the ours again to displease the suzerain by asking for it and

obtaining it. We therefore had no accredited representative in Dresden. M. de Rémusat lamented: "However," he wrote to me, "we cannot see without deep regret that France does not figure to any degree in the Dresden celebration. It seems to me that this is a discourteous procedure on our part, a kind of timidity. I still believe that what would be best is for you to find a way to travel to Saxony for a day at most, to give the King a short token of respect; this testimony would have nothing political..." Mr. de Rémusat considered that my status as ambassador could not give rise to suspicion that I was seeking the post of Dresden, and that my name was likely to ensure the approach in question of an almost personal nature which would certainly not have any consequences. "The thing," he added, "would be as unofficial as possible and would be motivated more by the laws of good manners than by those of diplomacy. The point is to know if you could get it accepted in this sense by the court of Berlin and by the diplomatic corps. These are things whose possibility can only be seen when one is on the scene. I therefore rely entirely on you. It's a matter of tact and prudence..."

M. de Rémusat's thinking was a little chimerical, and it seems that he believed it himself. It was not likely to satisfy anyone, neither those in question, - I will not say to abuse, because we wanted to act with perfect good faith, - but to reassure about our intentions, nor those to whom we sought to please. It didn't take long for me to convince myself of this. I was going to open up about my desires and my embarrassments, confidentially and in as private a capacity as possible, to two of my colleagues, whose opinions had a particular value for me in these circumstances, the Minister of Belgium, dean of foreign representatives, very familiar with diplomatic customs and procedures, then the minister of Saxony.

According to Mr. Nothomb, who found my presence in Dresden as desirable as it was suitable, and who was the first to broach this subject of conversation, the only practical way of going there would be to be provided with a letter of congratulations from Mr. the President of the Republic, and to present it myself to the King of Saxony, without having to give a copy to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. "It would be very natural, very suitable," he told me, "very well seen at the court of Saxony and found very simple at the court of Berlin. A visit of only a private nature, whatever the rank and name of the person making it, would not be understood, in particular, by Mr. de Friesen, who is, moreover, considered quite formalistic."

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Finance of the Kingdom of Saxony.

M. de Koenneritz, the Saxon minister in Berlin, completely shared M. Nothomb, but by emphasizing even more strongly the virtual impossibility of an unofficial visit by the French ambassador to Berlin. Like Saxon, it was very natural, moreover, that he preferred an official visit to an unofficial mission, and he made me understand that people in Dresden would be sensitive to my visit, if I brought there a letter of congratulations from the President. However, he understood the delicacy of my situation, probably also that of Saxony, and he proposed to me, in the event that I preferred it, to inform Dresden of the approach that I was taking with him and which would affect them, and the thing would stay there.

I instructed without delay Mr. de Rémusat of my two interviews and of the two parties between which we had to choose; but I did not conceal from him that in my eyes, the one which consisted of going to Dresden and delivering the President's congratulations there myself was preferable,

because it would probably be the most agreeable to the court of Saxony, although his representative in Berlin did not dare to consult it clearly, and he did not offer any disadvantages in relation to the German government. Two days later, the minister replied to me: "The President perfectly approves of what you have done and thought. He only wants not to give you a letter, because he fears interpretations. Then he sent me, in the name of the President, certain instructions to which the latter was very attached, the aim of which was to give my visit the character of a very simple thing, to avoid the suspicions which it could arouse in Berlin, thus to say a few words about it to the Secretary of State, Mr. de Balan,

Holder of the German legation in Brussels, then exercising by interim the functions of Secretary of State of Foreign affair, in which he was M. de Thile's replacement.

not by appearing to ask for his approval, but in order not to appear to be acting without his knowledge, then to extend little my stay in Dresden, etc.

My journey was therefore decided; I went to inform M. de Koenneritz; but the latter, while assuring that his court would appreciate, as it should, the honor of receiving the congratulations of the French head of state through the French ambassador in Berlin, strongly insisted that I was provided, in the absence of a letter from Mr. Thiers for the King, with a letter or at least an ostensible telegram addressed to me and giving me the mission to bring to the King and the Queen our Congratulations. He made it very clear to me that my visit to Dresden, without official testimony of my mission, put me in a very delicate, not to say unacceptable, situation for both.

I immediately referred the matter to Versailles, asking that this desire of the Minister of Saxony be granted, which

was very natural, it must be admitted, and which was very simple; too simple, perhaps, because without the good will of the court of Dresden and without the intervention of the Emperor himself, this unusual form of letters of credence would not have been sufficient to overcome the objections which were raised against my reception. M. de Rémusat decided M. Thiers to send me the following telegram which I received in Berlin the same evening:

Versailles, November 6, 1872.

“The President of the Republic asks you to go to Dresden, to ask for the honor of being received by S. Mr. the King of Saxony and to offer him, on his behalf, the expression of his respect, his sympathy and his sincere wishes for a long and happy future on the occasion of the celebration of a solemn anniversary.”

I informed Mr. de Koenneritz of my government's response, I asked him to be good enough to inform his Minister of Foreign Affairs of my arrival and to show him the desire I had to be received by the King and the Queen, “in order to offer them in person, as others will bring them in letters from their sovereigns, the congratulations of the President of the Republic.”

I warned him, at the same time, of the great difficulty I would experience, due to important matters, in extending my stay in Dresden as long as my other colleagues.

Before leaving, I went to see the Secretary of State, M. de Balan, and informed him of my departure for Dresden, where I could, I said, stay only two or three days. “Why are you in such a hurry, he replied? Why not stay there as much as the Emperor and Empress?” By bringing this insistence closer to several incidents in my staying in Dresden, which I will describe later, I was led to think that the chancellery hoped

that this occasion would resolve the question of representation to the small States of Germany: by considering myself everywhere as the French ambassador, I did not I would not need to be specifically accredited with any of these courses. I left Berlin on the evening of the 7th, accompanied by my son Joseph and an embassy attaché, Count d'Aubigny. I stayed at the Hotel Victoria. Before my arrival, a chamberlain had already presented himself to agree with me on my presentation. When I entered my apartment, I found Baron de Koerneritz waiting for me. He was kind enough to take it upon himself to announce my visit. He informed me that the grand master of ceremonies, Mr. de Gersdorff, would come to my house the next morning and that I would be received in private audience that same day, the 8th, at half past twelve.

M. de Koerneritz wanted to give me a distinguished welcome at the court of Saxony, but his efforts had to combat more than one difficulty; he told them to me confidentially. It was, first, the irregularity of the titles of my mission, then the necessity of giving a rank similar to mine to Count de Beust, charged by the Emperor of Austria-Hungary with conveying his congratulations, and for whom there was an ill-disposition at the court of Dresden, finally a certain worry about the discontent that might be given to Prussia, as a result of the reception that would be given to me. I must say straight away that all these difficulties disappeared as soon as the Emperor arrived; his good grace, of which he gave me a new testimony, wanted to avoid them for me. But my somewhat unexpected presence and my insufficiently defined situation had raised among the diplomats certain questions of etiquette regarding the rank I would occupy, either at court or with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The latter, well disposed, like M. de Koerneritz, supported with him that it was as *an ambassador charged with an extraordinary mission* that I was sent to

Dresden by the French government, that my situation, identical to that of Count de Beust, should be resolved in the same way, and that all two of us had to be treated as ambassadors. This opinion ended up prevailing against the opinion of the Prussian minister in particular; according to the latter, I was indeed French ambassador in Berlin, but I was not in Dresden, unless, he said, by the very fact that I was accredited to the Emperor of Germany, I was considered accredited to each of the sovereigns of the secondary states of the empire. We immediately see that this way of viewing my role resolved the question of diplomatic representation in these States. It was enough to make me push it away; moreover, the reality of things was opposed to it. In fact, that day, this is what I was: French ambassador to S. The Emperor of Germany, charged with an extraordinary mission near S. Mr. King of Saxony. This was how M. de Koenneritz had also defined it, and no one took it upon himself to deny it, at least as far as rank at court was concerned; but another little quibble was raised about places with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

As soon as Mr. de Koenneritz left, I wrote to Baron de Friesen to officially announce my arrival; but extending a little the terms of Mr. Thiers' telegram, a copy of which I attached to my letter, I said that charged by the President of the French Republic to go as French Ambassador to Dresden to offer to LL. MM. the King and Queen of Saxony his congratulations, his respects and his best wishes, I asked to be received for this purpose by Their Majesties. The interpretation of Mr. Thiers' telegram went a little beyond his thoughts perhaps; but, in explaining it thus, it seemed to me, on the one hand, to further safeguard the dignity of France, and, on the other, to give Saxony a satisfaction which would be agreeable to it. For the entire duration of my stay, which I thought I should extend beyond the term I had set for myself, I was treated as an

ambassador. The Count of Beust was like me, and people were so ill disposed towards him in society as at court that, if I had not been there, I doubt that they would have given him the rank that was given to him. assigned us.

On the 8th, at half past twelve, a court entourage in grand gala came to pick me up from the Victoria Hotel and took me, under the guidance of a chamberlain, to the royal palace. On my arrival, the post presented arms to me and the trumpets sounded; At the entrance to the small apartments, the guard also gave me all the honors reserved for ambassadors.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs came to meet me and introduced me into the Throne Room, where the King and Queen of Saxony received me, in profound silence, standing and surrounded by the ministers and the entire court. After having greeted them respectfully, I told them, in substance, that if circumstances which Their Majesties appreciated as well as I still postponed the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saxony and France, the President of the Republic nonetheless had keen to seize this solemn and touching opportunity to offer them a testimony of respect and sympathy at the same time as his wishes. He would have expressed these feelings himself in writing if, as a result of the difficult situation in which France and Saxony themselves found themselves at that moment, a letter had not given rise to certain erroneous and unfortunate comments. which it was also important for us to avoid. I made a slight allusion to the relations between our two countries in previous times, to the ties of various kinds which had united them and which could not be forgotten. I would like to add, — on the suggestions of the President, - some praise on the literary tastes of the King, by which he seemed flattered, recalling, at the same time, those of the French head of state; finally, I told him how happy

I considered myself to have been chosen as interpreter of the feelings and wishes of my government with regard to Their Majesties.

The King and Queen, after the numerous receptions of the morning, were extremely tired, and they certainly seemed so; they gave me a very gracious welcome, but said few words in response. The audience ended without the King having said anything characteristic to me, except perhaps a rather short sentence on the hope of seeing an end soon to the somewhat embarrassed situation of France and of Saxony one vis-à-vis the other, and another expressing its wishes for the maintenance of the tranquility of France. He slipped rather lightly on the two subjects, like an embarrassed man and knowing well that all his words were reported. He also instructed me to thank the President of the Republic very much for his congratulations, and my audience ended; it had lasted barely ten minutes. The court car took me home.

My rank at court was settled to my satisfaction; but, as I indicated above, another difficulty of precedence was raised by some members of the diplomatic corps, and in particular by the minister of Prussia, for the place to be occupied at the table of the minister of foreign affairs, with whom we were to have dinner on the evening of the 8th. How would we be placed, Mr. de Beust and I? This serious question was discussed between Mr. de Friesen and Mr. de Koenneritz, and the latter came to ask me for acquiescence in the arrangement agreed between them. The resident ministers, — in accordance with a custom adopted at the court of Saxony, — would be placed on one side of the minister of foreign affairs, and the non-resident, but accredited, on the other. The Austrian-Hungary ambassador and I would sit alone on the other side of the table, quite narrow and almost horseshoe-shaped, opposite the minister. Koenneritz assured me that this

arrangement was in accordance with the customs of Saxony; M. de Beust accepted it; It would therefore have been childish on my part to hesitate and I accepted this proposal without difficulty. Things happened like this, and Count de Beust and I entered the dining room first. I recount such petty details with some embarrassment, only to give a specimen of questions of etiquette in secondary courses, and in order to prove the lack of goodwill and kindness that I encountered among the Prussians in small causes and in the big questions. I found, on the contrary, a lot of courtesy and good grace in Baron Friesen.

Instead of staying twenty-four hours in Dresden, as I had planned, I spent four full days there. The difficulties of precedence which had been raised upon my arrival had been ironed out and settled in such a way as to give me complete satisfaction; the King, the Queen and their family, the entire court gave me a kind welcome; the Emperor and the Empress treated me with perfect good grace; so, there was no reason for me not to extend my stay throughout the holidays. There was even a special one for me to stay. The King granted me a favor which, at a time so close to our conflict with the Germans and our defeats, I would have liked to have avoided; he sent me, through Baron Friesen, the grand cord of the order of the Crown of Saxony, which is only given to very few people outside of princes. My refusal would have been considered an insult.

On the 9th, the religious ceremony took place, which was touching. It took place in a large gallery of the palace which had been converted into a chapel. The King and Queen were seated in front of the altar, surrounded by their children and grandchildren of the ministers of their houses military and civil. Two armchairs had been placed for the Emperor and the Empress on the sides of the gallery. After them were placed

the German princes, who came in large numbers to Dresden, with all the more eagerness because they knew how to meet the sovereigns of Germany there; then the diplomatic corps on ordinary and extraordinary missions. Count de Beust and I, placed separately as in all official circumstances, we could see and follow the ceremony wonderfully. The Austrian-Hungarian ambassador wore a uniform literally covered in ribbons and decorations; he had, in fact, almost all the orders of Europe. I had fun counting them and having the count tell me their origins. Finally, the rest of the gallery was filled by the court and the guests. I seem to remember that the ceremony was long; it was followed by various receptions, so that this day was very tiring.

There was a dinner at court and a grand ball, apart from a grand dinner with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and a ball with the Minister of War, M. de Fabrice.

The dinner service at the palace rightly excited my admiration: it was served entirely in old Saxon porcelain, of the most beautiful model and decorated with the most magnificent paintings. Prince George of Saxony (*Second son of the King*), next to whom I was placed, was kind enough to explain to me the dates and the origin of these porcelains. The silverware was also old and had the richest shapes. Finally, as if to complete the ancient appearance of this feast intended to celebrate the very ancient union of the King and Queen, the servants wore very old liveries.

I spent the mornings visiting the curiosities of the city, especially its admirable museum. I met there once with the Empress, led by the princess royal of Saxony, daughter of the last of the Wasa and niece of the Duchess of Hamilton whom I had known for a long time having seen her in Paris and in her husband's beautiful estates in Scotland, and whom I often saw

again in Baden-Württemberg. The royal princess of Saxony is very gracious.

Among the visits ordered by etiquette, I placed one to the Queen's great mistress, the Baroness de Globig, of whom I was related through her mother, sister of my cousin the last Duke of Esclignac, and whom I didn't know yet; we very affectionately renewed our family ties. I also had the honor of making the acquaintance of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, son-in-law of the Queen of England and sent by her to Dresden to congratulate the King and Queen of Saxony. I looked for opportunities to talk; they were provided to me hardly more than in Berlin, but for opposite reasons: in Berlin, I was the enemy and adversary of long standing; in Dresden, I was the friend of bygone times whom the partisans of Prussia and the official figures looked at today or believed themselves obliged to look at with the same eye that Prussia looked at me, and to whom those who did not forgive Prussia did not dare to confide in the subjugation of their country. So, I had conversations that were more banal than interesting; I collected, however, some remarks likely to enlighten me on the dispositions of the princes and the upper classes. At the grand court ball, the royal prince did me the honor of speaking with me. He has a distinguished mind and is considered the most remarkable soldier of all the German princes. From the curiosities of Dresden and the beauties contained in the museums, I shifted the conversation to Germany and the last war; I don't know if I was very well inspired, because this subject seemed to embarrass the prince a little, who, what I was unaware of that day, went on to fairly easily take his side of the pre-eminence of the Prussia and the successes in which he brilliantly cooperated. If I had been an older diplomat, I would have approached this subject with a little more reserve. The prince agreed that we should not count on the current

generation to obtain the assimilation of Alsace and Lorraine. But, as I told him that Germany had imposed a very large war indemnity on us, he exclaimed: "Don't complain too much, we could have asked you for more. You are so rich!"

He told me something else that struck me more. As I observed that in France, before the war, they did not have an exact notion of the unitary tendencies of Germany and that they were mistaken in this regard: "Do not believe that they existed in 1866, interrupted the prince, lowering his voice. If France had wanted it, they would not have developed. But now it's something else, the movement is irresistible!" Saxony, in fact, enclosed after 1866 in the Confederation of northern Germany, did not hesitate, in 1870, to fulfill its federal obligations. She gained the advantage of preserving the autonomy of her army, but it was not without difficulty that she obtained the execution of this convention. M. de Fabrice, who had at one time served as Minister of Saxony in Brussels and London, told me that it was only through the energy and perseverance of his brother, the Minister of War, that we had achieved it. He spent three months in Berlin to negotiate this arrangement. Seeing that he was dealing with a certain ill will and that things were dragging on without coming to an end, he went to the imperial prince, exposed his grievances to him, and, his willingness not to give up any of his rights, and he candidly asked for his support. The prince answered him: "I will speak frankly to you: I was of opinion to annex Saxony, but since other considerations prevailed, you must leave your army, and I will bring you justice." And it was done so.

But, aside from what this official world said and did, it was interesting to know what they thought, and I had the good fortune to obtain the confidences of a person whose situation put able to know perfectly the depths of things and hearts. This is what she told me:

The visit of the Emperor and the Empress caused a very unpleasant surprise. In Dresden, we wanted to limit ourselves to celebrating the golden wedding anniversary of the King and Queen with the family, but the Emperor and Empress having been announced, we had to necessarily change the character of the celebration, and that's why you saw so many people. At court, people feared Prussia's projects; the King is sad and full of apprehension for his succession. As for the royal prince, he is seduced by the cajoling of the German court. But his brother, Prince George, knows better than him what to expect in this regard, and he is wary of the Prussian princes. Since 1866, many Prussian generals have come to retire in Dresden, many other of their compatriots also settle there, so that, little by little, the country is invaded by the Prussians. You know that the Saxon army was, at a given time, to take the uniform of the Prussian army. At the last minute, the King decided to put the Prussian helmet on his head. It was Good Friday that he chose to put it on; it shows you his piety and his pain!"

The person who made these confidences to me continued to speak to me in this tone, and she expressed herself in very sharp and very unflattering terms about the character of the Emperor and Empress of Germany.

Last characteristic detail: there are still some Saxons - few, it is true - who are in the service of Austria. (G.-B.)

I thus learned what were the intimate feelings of the royal family of Saxony and its court in relation to Prussia. We can believe that we would garner the same note in the other secondary States that the victories of Prussia have made its vassals; I do not believe, however, that it was found, at least with the same force, in the bourgeoisie and in the people.

On November 12, I returned to Berlin, after having written to Baron Friesen my thanks for the good welcome that had been given to me. I reported to M. de Rémusat about my trip; I conveyed to him the thanks with which the King of Saxony had charged me for Mr. Thiers, towards whom all the princes had spoken very kindly to me. I added that the welcome given to the imperial family by the population of Dresden had been polite without being warm, and that I was led to believe that the court would have happily dispensed with his visit.

In another letter that I had the opportunity to write to the minister, on the 16th, I told him again: "I believe that we can be satisfied with my trip to Dresden. The court of Saxony was flattered and touched, and the Emperor, by the cordial welcome he gave me, proved to everyone that our relations with him were excellent and that he looked forward to my visit to Dresden as very suitable and very natural. However, we should not conclude that this extraordinary mission served as an imminent route to the resumption of regular relations between us and Saxony. I have reason to believe that, if this resumption is to take place, the King of Saxony will fear that, being very close, my visit will not appear to be a first step towards achieving it."

It was the Saxon minister at Berlin, Baron de Koenneritz, who made this observation to me, probably on the suggestions of his court. The French government took advantage of the opinion; but I persist in believing that to this matter of the resumption of diplomatic relations between France and the secondary states of Germany, he, through his timidity, gave a greater importance than that which the Imperial chancellery itself attached to it.

M. de Rémusat replied to me a few days later: "Your trip to Dresden was a wonderful success. I congratulate you."

This visit was pleasant in Saxony and not suspicious in Prussia. That's all we need. At the moment I have no desire to go further”

CHAPTER VII

INTERNAL SITUATION OF FRANCE AND IMPRESSIONS

Abroad The presidential message of November 13, 1872. — Unfavorable reception he found abroad. — Conversation between M. de Gontaut and Prince Gortchakoff. — The debates in the National Assembly. — Concerns caused outside France by our divisions. — Ratings from German newspapers. — Conversation between M. de Gontaut and the Count of Redern. — The fear that Mr. Gambetta inspires. — Continuation of the debates in the National Assembly; appointment of the Commission of Thirty. — Efforts by Mr. de Gontaut to calm concerns in Berlin. — Conversations with the Emperor and Empress of Germany. — Rconciliation between the French government and the right. — Satisfaction felt by Germany.

In a letter, dated October 11, that Mr. de Rémusat had sent to me at Navailles, a few days before I returned to my post, he showed himself to be very happy and very reassured about the internal situation and the relations between M. Thiers and the Assembly. It wouldn't take long for him to be undeceived.

On November 13, the President of the Republic addressed a message to the Assembly that remains famous; he himself came to read it from the tribune. The importance of this document escaped no one, neither in France nor abroad; no one, with the exception of a few friends of Mr. Thiers,

expected such clearly republican declarations. The Pact of Bordeaux was like a tent under which all parties sheltered and had to live in peace; the message was heartbreaking. The antagonism which remained latent between the right of the Assembly and Mr. Thiers came to light in the document. From this moment the struggle broke out; it only ceased on May 24, 1873 with the fall of Mr. Thiers, to then resume to the disadvantage of the conservative party.

At the beginning of his message, Mr. Thiers insinuates that, thanks to the order that he, Thiers, maintained, the form of monarchy was able to disappear and the republican form to acclimatize and give society the same benefits as the monarchy, vitality, confidence and rest. The republic, according to him, must be "the government of the nation which, having wanted for a long time and in good faith to leave to a hereditary power the shared direction of its destinies, but having failed to do so, through faults impossible to judge today, she finally decides to govern herself, herself alone, through her freely elected, wisely appointed representatives, without regard to party, class or origin... Two years have passed before your eyes, under your influence, under your control, in almost complete calm, can give us hope of founding this conservative republic." — He is very careful, in fact, to say that it is only a matter of this, and he wants to impose it on the old Jacobin republicans in the name of the principles of 89. — "The republic will be conservative or it will not be," he exclaims very sincerely, but with a singular thoughtlessness for a man who claims to know the history and spirit of France so well, and, reaffirming his thoughts, he boldly issues these serious declarations: "Events have given rise to the republic, and going back to its causes to discuss them and to judge them would today be an enterprise as dangerous as it is useless. The republic exists, it is the legal government of the country:

wanting something else would be a new revolution... Let us not waste our time proclaiming it; but let's use it to imprint its desirable and necessary characteristics on it." Then, modifying his language a little, he ended with a peroration which is a model of the insinuating genre. "The form of this republic was only a form of circumstance... but all minds are waiting for you, all are wondering what day, what form you will choose to give to the republic this conservative force which it cannot rely on. move on... It's up to you to choose one or the other. The country, by giving you its powers, gave you the obvious mission of saving it, by first providing it with peace; after peace, order; with order, the restoration of its power, and finally a regular government... It is up to you to determine the succession, the time of these various parts of the work of salvation which is entrusted to you. God forbid we take your place! But... when you have chosen some of you to meditate on this momentous work, if you want our opinion, we will give it to you loyally and resolutely." All this was presented with consummate skill, infinite art.

However, so many singularly bold assertions, very premature to say the least, did not pass without raising the strongest protests from the right; It was responded to on the left with warm, almost enthusiastic applause, which gave Mr. Thiers' declarations, whether he wanted it or not, their true meaning.

The very emotional impressions of the monarchists were summed up in this word: the Bordeaux pact is violated! Abroad, the same thing is said, and, on the other hand, a certain passage in the presidential document, regarding the tricolor flag, was designed to arouse suspicion. "The revolution of 1789, it was said, destroyed the classes; it established the existence of all on the basis of true social justice; these principles invaded the world because they were nothing other

than this social justice proclaimed and applied for the first time on this earth. And it's because of what we have could say that the tricolor flag would go around the world!" This sentence, intended in the mind of Mr. Thiers to respond to the declarations of the Count of Ghambord against the tricolor flag, was no less imprudent with regard to Europe, although it was followed by a certain reserve intended to mitigate its effects. "Following a conqueror," he added, "he marched victorious; but his material works have perished. His moral works survive and are the most solid glory of France."

Great emotion therefore followed the reading of the message. Mr. Audren de Kerdrel, acting, with his clairvoyance and his usual moderation, as the interpreter of the feelings which agitated the Assembly, requested the appointment of a commission which would present to it a draft response to the message of Mr. the president of the Republic. His proposal, amended in a way already indicating a certain approval of Mr. Thiers' ideas, was adopted in these somewhat baroque terms: A commission will be appointed which will decide whether or not it is necessary to appoint a commission responsible for to respond to the message. The emergency was declared, and, on November 18, the Assembly appointed commissioners; They were, moreover, chosen in the majority from the right.

I indicated this earlier: impressions abroad, particularly in Germany, were not favorable to the message. The day after his appearance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. de Rémusat, sent the following dispatch to diplomatic agents which did not tell the whole truth: "The message from the President of the Republic was read by himself and interrupted by lively and frequent" marks of approval. It is divided into two parts, a motivated exposition of the prosperity of France, the picture of which will inspire great confidence in all those who wish it to be happy and strong, an energetic appeal to the

conservative spirit and the feelings of the necessary order to any government and more than any other to the republican government.”

Here is what I wrote to Mr. de Rémusat in a private letter dated the 16th:

It was the day before yesterday that we learned of the message in Berlin. I cannot yet tell you definitively the effect it produced; first impressions are dubious. The fact is that we generally did not expect to hear about forming the republic so soon. Let us not hide from ourselves: the word republic still sounds bad to foreigners. The epithet provisional had a better effect than was probably believed at Versailles. It was not the republic strictly speaking, and as in Russia, in Germany, we are convinced that deep down France is not republican, we did not expect the declarations of the message, so softened that they want to be. You will read my conversation with Prince Gortchakoff, passing through Berlin. I enclose it with this letter. The prince was leaving the Emperor William. You will see that I tried to emphasize to him the conservative nature of the message. It is nonetheless true that neither Prince Gortchakoff, nor the Emperor, nor German statesmen view the establishment of the republic in France with indifference; they fear it for us, they fear it for themselves, as an example at least. This was confirmed to me just now by a German diplomat, a very serious and intelligent man.”

I moved on from there to my personal impressions: “As for what concerns me in particular, Mr. Minister, your usual kindness will authorize me to confide to you that I regret a little that Mr. Thiers believed in the necessity of already proposing to constitute the republic. What's the point of leaving the truce again? Is it certain that the proposals in the message will be approved by the majority of the Assembly? His first actions raise doubts. It would therefore a definitive split between the

right and the President? What could be more unfortunate than such a result? Already see the joy of all the Republican newspapers! On the other hand, admitting the majority's refusal to agree with the views of Mr. Thiers, the dissolution campaign will be resumed with all the more vigor as we believe we have the President as an auxiliary."

And I added that in the event that the efforts of the dissolutionists were successful, the Assembly which would succeed this one would make organic laws in a **revolutionary spirit**.

To this argument, Mr. de Rémusat replied that in this case it was therefore better to ask the current Assembly to make organic laws, as proposed by Mr. Thiers. Mr. de Rémusat would have been right if there had been an obligation, a commitment, to have the organic laws made by the current Assembly or by the next, but this was not the case. Furthermore, I will return a little later to the correspondence which took place on this subject between MM. Thiers, de Rémusat and me. (G.-B.)

I ended my letter with these words: "It seems to me that it would be better to prolong the current state, despite all its disadvantages, and only talk about constituting after the liberation of the territory and after the most important organic laws."

The Baron of Schleinitz, minister of the King's household, said to me: "The message is entirely republican; This is a violation of the Bordeaux Pact!" The fact is that neither in Berlin, nor in Dresden, nor in Saint Petersburg, did anyone believe in the republican future of France. The Belgian minister, Mr. Nothomb, whose political spirit I have already mentioned, thanks to which he had acquired a highly regarded

position in Berlin, expressed the opinion that it would have been preferable to continue the provisional approach. Prince Gortchakoff told me, on this occasion, a rather piquant anecdote: "Mr. Thiers was not always a republican, witness this remark that I heard from his mouth in Baden in 1851: "A certain number of conservatives," he told me, "gave their votes for the presidency of the Marshal Bugeaud.

Prince Gortchakoff made a name confusion and he probably meant General Cavaignac. (G.-B.)

For my part, I gave mine to Prince Louis Napoleon, in order to kill the Republic through ridicule."

The Chancellor of Russia was in fact in Berlin at the time the message was known there. I communicated to him, free of charge, the telegram from Mr. de Rémusat and he came to see me the same day. The day before, I had already had a conversation with him about the message announced, but not yet known and impatiently awaited, which was to be communicated to the Assembly almost at the time of my visit.

"Mr. Thiers has done us great services," I said to the prince, in response to the compliments he addressed to the President, "I believe you will be happy with his message. I saw him just a month ago. At that time, he did not intend to raise constitutional questions. He would perhaps suggest to the Assembly that it should take some measures to strengthen the guarantees of order; but that would limit his initiative; and if the Assembly accepted his plans, he would probably propose to appoint a commission which would come to an agreement with the government to combine these measures.

Notes taken after a visit to Prince Gortchakoff, on November 13, 1872, less than a month after seeing Mr. Thiers, in Paris. (G.-B.)

Nothing better, replied Prince Gortchakoff, I told you so and I repeat: we have only one desire, to see order maintained in France; Faced with the failure of the merger, Russia has no objection to a conservative republic." It was the day after this first conversation that the Chancellor of Russia learned of the message, which, it must be admitted, did not conform to the confidences that Mr. Thiers had made to me so shortly before, and that I had reported in good faith to the prince. He expressed a surprise which did not escape me and which deep down I shared with him, with an added feeling of sadness. He came from the Emperor William, and I am justified in believing that their impressions were very similar.

Mr. Thiers had not been so affirmative until now," he said to me with a concerned air. It is indeed the conservative republic. Moreover, the right immediately protested. Mr. Thiers requested the appointment of a commission which would examine, in conjunction with the government, certain measures likely to consolidate the republic. Hopefully the deal will come out of this.

I had only had a summary of the message, and I tried to justify it by replying to Prince Gortchakoff that I saw two things in it: the observation of the existence, in fact, of the republic, which could not be denied, and the absolute necessity of maintaining conservative principles. This last declaration being the main point of the message, everyone should be satisfied with it, in Europe as well as in France.

It would be going beyond my subject to report here all the details of this interview in which Prince Gortchakoff gave me a satisfactory picture of the general situation in Europe. I, for my part, reassured him about the state of our internal affairs, about the little chance offered by the possibility of the arrival of Mr. Gambetta in power, a prospect always feared, constantly recalled by foreigners, and on the occasion of which

Mr. de Rémusat believed he had some reason to suspect an understanding between the great powers. Trying to obtain clarification on this point, as our minister desired, I introduced in the course of the conversation a sentence on the possibility of a hostile attitude that the powers could take, for example in the event that the left would seize power. The prince interrupted me: "Hostility? No; but it could become so, especially if France intended to carry out propaganda; but, as a general rule, we refrain from any interference in your internal affairs." I did not insist, of course, and I continued to reassure him about our policy.

He then spoke to me about the *fusion* between the Legitimists and the Orléanists, regretting that it had not taken place and admitting to me that he did not understand the susceptibilities of the Count of Chambord regarding the flag. I explained them to him without hiding from him that certain prejudices reigned in the mind of this prince gifted, moreover, with loyalty, patriotism and so many other qualities, but failing to understand that if France had repugnance against the white flag is that, rightly or wrongly, this flag represented, in his eyes, the old regime. "The merger not having succeeded," I added, "the future remains with God; but the work of the present is the need not to shake the only practicable state of things at this moment, to surround it with guarantees of order and to remain firmly and invariably conservative." Prince Gortchakoff was of the same opinion as me, but without abandoning the concerned air with which he had begun the interview.

Very few days after the publication of the message - one could say: after the declaration of war brought to the podium by Mr. Thiers - hostilities began. It was General Changarnier who began them, on November 18, in the name of the entire right, regarding a keynote speech delivered some

time previously in Grenoble by Mr. Gambetta and whose revolutionary doctrines had deeply moved the conservative country. Changarnier, in very lively language, although apparently sympathetic to the President of the Republic, brought to the podium the grievances of the right against the equivocal attitude of the latter and his government; he criticized them for encouraging the left and being applauded by it. He accused, in short, Mr. Thiers of having left the Bordeaux pact, although we were in a provisional state of affairs. This last word provoked quite strong denials from the part of the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Victor Lefranc, too strong, because, a few days later, Mr. Dufaure, vice-president of the Council of Ministers, recognized the provisional nature of the government. But this claim of not being under a provisional regime gave rise to interruptions and violent accusations from the right; it widens the conflict. The debate was lively and acrimonious. The responses of the minister and especially of Mr. Thiers were haughty and irritated. Mr. Thiers maintained, not without some reason, that this arrest was a sign of distrust, that its precedents made it undeserved and that a long conservative past exempted him from responding to the insulting accusations of the right. Mr. Thiers was not wrong to believe in distrust; but it was not a question of his past, it was the present that was incriminated, and whether it was an exaggeration of susceptibility or calculation, he did not want to explain the present. However, despite his refusal to answer, he made some satisfactory statements in a second speech.

To close the debate, several agendas were presented, one coming from the pure right and involving Mr. Thiers more than he wanted; a second from the left, which compromised him too much, and a third signed by MM. Mettetal and Cornelis de Witt, members of the very moderate right, carrying these

words: "The Assembly, confident in the energy of the government and reprobating the doctrines professed at the Grenoble banquet, moves on to the agenda."

Mr. Thiers sharply refused the first, declined the second and accepted the third, which was voted by 263 votes to 116. Two thirds of the right, believing that the latter sacrificed truth to conciliation, abstained. According to them, there was no point in blaming the weakness and compromise of Mr. Thiers in the questioning, and then declaring that we had confidence in his energy. Nothing to say against this reasoning. The conflict was therefore not over, far from there. The debate was simply a first skirmish which made it possible to see the positions occupied by the two parties - because Mr. Thiers and the right are already and very visibly two different parties - and to prejudge what would be the terrain where the great battle would take place, the day when the commission appointed to examine the message would have submitted its report.

These discussions, the hostilities which broke out between the various parts of the Assembly, particularly between the right and Mr. Thiers, the rumors of the latter's resignation once again circulating, all this produced a detestable effect abroad, gave the idea that it was almost impossible to restore social peace here and, ultimately, undermined France's reputation. I was very concerned and very saddened, it will be easy to believe; insufficiently informed on the part of the government and on the part of my friends, I was quite embarrassed, either to answer the questions addressed to me, or to go to the front and to calm the anxieties which arose in Berlin.

On the 23rd, I wrote to Mr. de Rémusat the following lines, all confidential:

"I would like to know your opinion on the incidents of this week. Far from Versailles, without letters and reduced to published newspapers and telegrams, I do not dare to rely on my assessments alone. What is each person's share of responsibility? Were there provocations from one side or another, and were there justified or exaggerated sensitivities? Is the break between the President of the Republic and the right deep, are the feedback sincere? Will all this be profitable for the conservative republic? It's possible; but what I consider certain is that France will gain neither in union nor in consideration. From the questions asked to me, from the accent of the people who address them to me, it is easy to recognize that we do not see these divisions in our country without concern and that we do not see our future in a satisfactory light. I reassure more than I am reassured myself; I say that we should not be too disturbed by the quarrels between the President and the majority, because they only concern different views on a common goal, the conservative regime. But, between us, I do not have to hide my concerns from you. I see irritation on both sides in France, I read hurtful words and I wonder, assuming that we finally agree on a certain resolution, if peace will be restored in people's minds as a result."

May I not be painfully struck by the silence of Mr. Gambetta, the applause from the left for all the President's words, the approaches made by this same side of the Assembly to Mr. Thiers, the pompous praise which he are given by his former enemies and by all the advanced leaves, with one or two exceptions, finally of the increasingly deep separation which is taking place between Mr. Thiers and the conservatives, that is to say the men who incontestably represent the principles of order? "Mr. Thiers told me at the Elysée, a month ago, that he no longer believed in serious

dissidence between the right and him; he had informed me of his resolution to accentuate in the platform, even more than he had done in the tenure committee, his language on the subject of Mr. Gambetta and the radicals. It is very unfortunate that inappropriate or inappropriate words made him decide to remain silent.

I spoke to you, in my last communication, about the impression produced here by the message. What has come back to me since hardly changes my initial information, despite the more or less interested language of some newspapers. So, I did not read without some slight surprise the assertions of the Public Good and the Universal Correspondence on the excellent effect produced by the message on foreign courts; This is an exaggeration. I have spoken again with members of the diplomatic corps and I generally find them a little worried - for their own countries - about the plans to establish a republic here, even a conservative republic."

On the 24th, a newspaper which at that time passed for one of the unofficial organs of the chancellery, the *Gazette de Spener*, contained an article unsympathetic to France in general and to Mr. Thiers in particular. It was at least a harsh judgment on the state of our country, "whose destiny, it was said, depends on the capricious agreement of an incalculable number of personalities, which borders an abyss and perhaps makes illusory the better financial guarantees;" on the illusions that Mr. Thiers seemed to have in this regard "the only man who supports public order by the power of his intelligence and by his popularity". Finally, by recognizing that France and Germany were on a peaceful footing with each other, the article noted many points of divergence between them and pointed out, in conclusion, "the desperate state into which one of the first countries in Europe had fallen, where crises follow crises without any leading to any chance of recovery."

Note the allusion to the security of war indemnity payments. This was, in fact, for the Germans, the main object of their concerns. Two days later, the same Spener Gazette, returning to the same subject, declared, amid very disdainful assertions for France, that Germany did not need, to ensure the payment of the compensation, intervene, even morally, in internal questions of government, as his situation, the memories of the Commune and the occupation of four departments gave him sufficient guarantees.

The *Gazette de Northern Germany*, also an unofficial organ of the chancellery - in many circumstances at least and, we have reason to believe, in this one - taking another point of view, supported the views of the right. She defended the Pact of Bordeaux which, "by establishing the relationship between the National Assembly and Mr. Thiers, had at the same time founded the basis of relations and negotiations between France and Germany;" in his eyes "the only solution to the crisis which was agitating France at that time was in the return to the strict observation of the Pact of Bordeaux." Then it established, in opposition to the doctrines of Mr. Thiers, the true principles in matters of republican government. The passage is worth quoting: "The President of the Republic is only the delegate of the National Assembly; vis-à-vis it, it is not in the position of the crown vis-à-vis Parliament in other countries. He is only the agent of the Chamber, he is not an equal power next to it. Mr. Thiers wants a return to the system of two Chambers to return to the theory of three equal powers. Two of these can, in fact, be established; as for the third, the one who has the most weight, we can place him alongside the other two to exercise the presidency of the republic, but he will not therefore be a power equal in rights to the other two, because the Revolution cannot does not create rights. " And

the Gazette added: "This is the way of seeing of the majority, that is to say of the right."

In the meantime, the fairly well-founded rumor of the resignation of M. Thiers had spread again to Berlin. The German government may well not approve of all of Mr. Thiers' views on the reorganization of France, but it was very keen on his continued presidency of the Republic; for him it was the strongest guarantee of payment of the war indemnity. On the 26th, I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs the following telegram: "Although my distance from Versailles obliges me to make very reserved assessments of the debates of the Assembly, my duty is to warn you that we are beginning to worry quite seriously here about their sequels. Mr. Thiers' broadcast, if he were disposed to give it, would produce the most deplorable effect, and it is difficult to predict the consequences."

A conversation that I had that same day or the day before with a considerable personage at court, the Count of Redern, grand chamberlain and particular friend of the Emperor, of whom I have already had the opportunity to speak, seemed to me worth reporting; As we will see, it touched on many diverse subjects. M. de Redern had gone to Alsace- Lorraine in the autumn; he assured me that there were very good relations between General de Manteuffel and Mr. de Saint-Vallier, and even between the German soldiers and the inhabitants of these provinces. From there he quickly moved on to the subject that relentlessly preoccupied every good German, the reorganization of our army, at the same time as he showed concern about the resignation of Mr. Thiers. "You would be crazy," he said to me, "to make war on us."

I assured him that this remark, coming from a man so intelligent and so well placed to draw on certain sources, surprised me; that we were a hundred leagues from wanting to

attack Germany; that, moreover, our military organization, fixed in principle, was not very advanced.

"It must be admitted, however," he continued, "that you have recovered admirably, and that is fortunate, because you are one of the great powers of Europe and your existence is necessary to it. But it is also important to him that you are calm, and I see with concern that your internal situation is troubled at the moment; We talk a lot about this unfortunate Gambetta. So, would he really have any chance of coming to power? Continue your reorganization. It helps if you have a large army to keep order at home."

On this subject, repeated with a certain insistence, I replied that undoubtedly a strong army was necessary for a great power like France, not to safeguard internal order, a task for which inconsiderable forces would suffice, but because, at excluding any aggressive view, it was important, in the complicated state of affairs in Europe, to ensure our independence was respected. "But I must not hide from you," I continued, "that there is a certain anxiety among us about your future designs. We hear that the Emperor is tormented by our military reorganization and that you are preparing for war in 1874. — Don't believe it, interrupted Count Redern, you have been deceived. The King has no such plans; we have not the slightest idea of waging war on you; we feel as much as anyone the need for peace."

The protests of the Grand Chamberlain were certainly sincere, but they were in opposition to certain remarks that one of our most intelligent agents, Mr. Lefebvre de Béhaine, charge d'affaires in Munich, had reported to us as being true. an ordinarily reliable source; and this is why I thought I had to explain it to my interlocutor.

I then reassured him about the spirit of our army, to which he attributed Bonapartist tendencies. I told him again

that Mr. Thiers would not resign, that if there were at the moment some dissidence between him and the right, the latter in no way resented his power, understanding that his presence at the head of the government offered valuable benefits. The disagreements basically only concerned questions of opportunity, Mr. Thiers fearing the prolongation of a provisional state of affairs, and the right believing that it presented, on the contrary, more advantages than inconveniences. — There was no point in letting him see my personal concerns; I had to hide them from him and, as I saw him worried about France, I wanted to reassure him. — In summary, my interlocutor showed himself, like Prince Gortchakoff, concerned about the plans for republican organization contained in the message. He feared the probable repercussions in Europe and he hardly concealed from me that in Germany too, the internal state was not without clouds. Above all, he insisted on the importance of maintaining Mr. Thiers as president in order to prevent the advent of Gambetta.

I did not want and I should not let the French government ignore any of the symptoms that I collected on the occasion and in relation to the message. On the 28th, I sent him a new dispatch; I reported to him the language of the two newspapers that I have just cited and I said to him at the end: "I saw M. de Balan; he expressed to me the hope that things would work out between the Assembly and the President; but he told me that Mr. Thiers, according to what he was told, had conferences with M. Gambetta; he seemed worried. I tried to reassure him on this point and on all the others. In short, we are very concerned here about the results of the discussion which is to begin today, and we generally hope that Mr. Thiers will not resign.

Two days later, I developed in a letter what my telegram briefly indicated, I reported to the minister the

language I used in Berlin to reduce the bad impressions produced by our discussions and our internal quarrels, and to impress this conviction on people's minds. that, in all cases, Europe could be reassured that order and peace would be maintained. Mr. Delbruck, the president of the Federal Chancellery, seemed more reassured than Mr. de Lalan and more confident in the tranquility in France, despite the struggle engaged in the Assembly. I was still telling M. de Rémusat about my conversation with the Count of Redern; finally, I ended with these lines: "In two words, Mr. Minister, the general feeling here is the desire for Mr. Thiers to remain in power; at the same time, we extremely fear the chances that the future may hold for Mr. Gambetta and everything that is likely to favor them."

When I wrote these letters, I was still ignorant of the result of the debate initiated at Versailles, at least I only knew the details very incompletely. Here's what was happening there. On the 26th, Mr. Batbie, rapporteur of the commission responsible for examining Mr. de Kerdrel's proposal, the purpose of which was to respond to Mr. Thiers' message, tabled his report on the desk of the Assembly, and, upon popular demand, he read it. I will not give a complete account of this document, nor of the speeches which were made during this discussion, the most important, I believe, from the point of view of the internal affairs of France, which took place during the existence of the 'Assembly; but I nevertheless wish to put before the eyes of my readers as summary and as exact an analysis as possible; knowledge of it is useful even from the point of view of our relations with foreigners.

In fact, Mr. Batbie's report was the response to the President's Republican message. He outlined his grievances against the latter, and, while not concealing his opinions, he expressed the reserved attitude that the conservative party

intended to maintain for the present. Establishing clearly, at the beginning, that the duty as well as the right of the Assembly was not to dissolve, he clearly noted that if the "wounded noble", France, was beginning to rise again, it was thanks to the joint efforts of the Assembly and the President, while Mr. Thiers, in such matters, generally ignored the Assembly's part. Mr. Batbie criticized Mr. Thiers for being biased towards the Republicans and thereby being unfaithful to the Pact of Bordeaux; he accused him of maintaining the equivocation by means of which, while calling himself and being truly conservative, he allowed the Republicans to abuse his name, to proclaim themselves in the elections as supporters of his policies, to give for his allies, and made them applaud his message. Finally, the rapporteur urged the President to adopt a policy of energetic repression against the evil passions which threatened society's very existence, in a word and following an expression that remains famous, to organize "a combat government". But as for organizing the republic, the monarchists refuse to do so. They do not believe the time has come to discuss the question of monarchy and republic; However, they give the President the assurance that all projects whose aim will be to provide him with the necessary means to maintain order, make up for the insufficiency of the laws and arm the administration with useful powers in the department and the commune, they will not hesitate to grant them to him. In this regard, they will wait for the government's initiative.

But there was a crucial point, in their eyes, on which they believed they had to explain: The main cause of the malaise which manifested itself in the active life of the Assembly, according to them, would be the personal intervention of the head of the Assembly. executive power in its debates; it is she who would undermine the freedom and

sincerity of its deliberations, since the head of the executive power could at any moment cover up a minister under questioning and thus transform a ministerial question into a government question. And, in the form of a conclusion, the commission set out Mr. Thiers' proposals, it declared that the only necessity of the moment was to organize the responsibility of ministers.

This was a somewhat petty conclusion and the main mistake was to give weight to the accusation brought against the monarchists of putting their quarrels of rivalry with Mr. Thiers before the measures necessary to strengthen and guarantee the order which they rightly said was threatened.

The vice-president of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Dufaure, skillfully seizing the conclusions of the commission, pointed out that it was quite singular that it found no other response to the message than to prohibit the President approaching the rostrum; "Moreover," he added, "if you want to arrive at this strange combination of a head of the executive power responsible to you and who will not have the right to take part in your debates, you must at least find compensation to the suppression of this right in all other institutions. Let us therefore organize the public authorities, expand the commission's proposal and have a commission of thirty members appointed by the offices to present to the National Assembly a bill to regulate the attributions of the public authorities as well as the conditions of ministerial responsibility." It was, in reality, persisting in the conclusions of the message that Mr. Dufaure was presented, moreover, as having obtained esteem in France and as imbued, according to foreigners, with true greatness, which was clearly more than exaggerated.

The commission in turn persisted in its conclusions, and the day after this session, November 29, Mr. Thiers

spoke. This speech, calmer than one might have suspected based on the animation of his language during the questioning of Changarnier, was certainly one of his oratorical masterpieces. Insinuating in the exordium, then, in its developments, displaying a lot of good nature, simplicity, then affecting a perfect sincerity of serene impartiality and, suddenly, becoming of a boldness to disconcert his adversaries and of an almost haughty contemptuous of conservatives, taking great care to maintain itself constantly in his equivocation, while having the pretension to dissipate that which he saw on the side of his opponents, he justified his conduct, his attitude, and, without breaking a single step, he maintained in full the request that he had made to the Assembly, to organize the government of the republic.

Mr. de Gontaut, in the pages which follow, gives less textual quotations from the speech than a substantial analysis.

"I did not ask you in the message, I am not asking you," he said, "to proclaim forever this or that form of government, to bind the future of France, no! but to give the government as we have, sincerely, loyally, the means to ensure rest and regular development for the country. I'm not asking you anything else."

Then, after these words of unexpected moderation and doubtful sincerity, he went straight to the accusations of the right and he explained what was meant by the Bordeaux pact. "You reproach me," he said, "for being applauded by the left. I will explain the reasons to you. In Bordeaux, I received the power of the circumstances themselves, no conditions were made for me, no one came to tell me: We need a monarchy or we need a republic; We only thought of one thing in terms of political principles: respecting the faith of everyone, and it was

then that I conceived what was called the Pact of Bordeaux. There was already a form of government given by events, the republic, and to seize power in front of those who occupied it, there was only one way, to preserve the title of the republic. Everyone's faith, I said, remains free; but the fact is the republic; we would practice the republic frankly; but when the wounded man had recovered his strength and the power of reflection, it was well understood that he would decide in favor of the form of government which would suit him, which did not imply the obligation to remain indefinitely in a temporary accommodation that the country ended up finding dangerous. And here is the Bordeaux pact!...

"As for what concerns me," added M. Thiers, "I said that I would not betray anyone; I am not of any party, I govern in the name of fact, I want to ensure order and prosperity in the country by means of moderation and conciliation, and not by combat. During the Commune, all those who held power in the big cities - very irregularly, which Mr. Thiers did not say - came to me and offered to separate from it, on the condition that I would not work for the monarchy; they would have wanted a similar commitment from the Assembly. I replied that no one was conspiring in the Assembly. But for me I would maintain the republic, I was believed and no uprising took place. The Assembly is therefore not committed; I alone am. God forbid that in my old age I want to push the country into this or that future because I am bound!"

And becoming animated, he exclaims in an emotional accent, with profound skill: "Yes, under the influence of circumstances, I gave my word. You have every right to tell me: keep your commitments; I'm ready; that I leave power and my commitment is fulfilled. Let me be thrown aside if you want, and I will not be offended, you will be within your rights. Ah! if one of the three monarchies were possible today and could

meet the submission of the country which gave itself to the republic, I would say to myself: I alone am committed to the republic, I withdraw; and I will let you make the monarchy. With what happiness I would withdraw from power! Interrupt me at this moment if you believe that the interest of the country is to make the monarchy today, take power.”

And, amid the frenzied applause of the left, he made this new declaration: “I am an old disciple of the monarchy who practices the republic for two reasons: because he is committed, and because, practically, today, he can't do anything else. You ask me why I am applauded: there it is!”

And he added in a provocative and triumphant tone: “I am not applauded on the left, because I share the opinions and doctrines of the Republicans, even moderates, - I don't think like them on anything - but because I am very firm on this point: that today there is no other possible government in France than the conservative republic... The ambiguity no longer exists on my side, come and dispel it from you.”

Mr. Thiers could have ended his speech there; he had made his essential declarations; he had conquered the position he had proposed to take. However, he wanted to respond to the other criticisms contained in Mr. Batbie's report and he did so briefly: “The elections are bad, in your opinion; what can I do? The law of numbers is the law of the land; now, the number is republican; It is the candidates who think like me who will have the best chance of being appointed.” And tackling the conclusion of the report: “You complain that I resist you, that I appear too often on the platform; but can I do otherwise? I am a responsible and temporary leader to whom the system of irresponsibility applied to kings cannot be applied. If you want to deprive me of the means to resist you, you only have one thing to do: an organization in which all the parts agree with each other; finally, if you distrust me, say it

frankly, without detour, and as for a devious distrust, I will not resign myself to it."

Such was this speech; such was Mr. Thiers' new profession of faith. He was right to say: equivocation no longer exists on my side; but was his conduct more justified? No! Mr. Thiers had made a formal commitment in Bordeaux not to bind the country: I will not be of any party, I will not prepare any solution, I will be content to reorganize the country which, once restored, will choose. This is what he had said, and, quietly extricating himself from his words, he had little by little acted in the opposite direction. This was demonstrated without reply by a deputy from Vienne, Mr. Ernoul, in a very moderate and very courteous speech, but very clear, very substantial and very remarkable. Mr. Ernoul refused to accept the question as Mr. Thiers had asked it, he denied that the Bordeaux pact had the meaning given to it by the President, and, in order to make the country judge of the validity of the commitments of that Here, he recalled the words spoken by him: "No, I swear before the country," Mr. Thiers had said in Bordeaux, "no, I swear before history not to deceive any of you, not to prepare in relation to constitutional questions no solution without your knowledge... We are only concerned with the reorganization of the country. We will always ask for your support for this reorganization, since we know that if we left this limited task, we would divide you and we would divide ourselves... In what form will the reorganization take place? In the form of a republic. When the country is reorganized... we will come here and tell you: ... It is time to give it its final form, and I give you the word of an honest man, none of the questions that have been reserved will have been resolved."

This language, compared to the speech that Mr. Thiers had just given, is incontestably enough to put him in the wrong. Mr. Ernoul completed the demonstration by proving

that the President's actions put him in contradiction with his words. Mr. Thiers led the country towards the definitive republic; he governed from the beginning with the minority of the Assembly, he encouraged republican addresses in the general and municipal councils, he did nothing against the republican press threatening the Assembly. Finally, as a result of the President's frequent intervention in its debates, the Assembly found, in its discussions, only governmental crises. And the speaker, in an eloquent peroration, implored the President, in the name of the right, to remain faithful to the doctrines of his entire life, to remain at the head of the conservatives who do not bargain for his time, who will put an end to their divisions, finally not to abandon the right of the Assembly which conferred its powers on it. "The day Mr. Thiers places himself at the center of the conservative party, you will see if there is a real majority in the country and in this Assembly."

These were the last words of this noble and sincere adjuration. But the adjuration fell into a void. The siege of Mr. Thiers was completed, his plan decided, his supporters carefully indoctrinated. If he returned to the podium, it was, in reality, not to respond to Mr. Ernoul, but to persist in his resolutions, with the help of certain oratorical precautions unworthy of him. "In the examination of constitutional questions," he said, "you will do with my attributions what you wish: If you give me insufficient ones to govern, I will withdraw!... My life is terrible!... The question of trust must be resolved!"

In vain Mr. Lucien Brun, with his great talent, rejuvenating the arguments of Mr. Batbie and Mr. Ernoul, affirmed that it was here neither a question of republic nor monarchy, nor of personal questions, that he There was, basically, no distrust against Mr. Thiers, the only thing wanted

was to link him to the conservatives, it was a wasted effort. We had a vote: 335 votes were in favor of the commission's proposal and 372 for that of the government. The majority moved from right to left. Mr. Thiers won and the organization of the republic gained favor in the Assembly. It was a serious failure for the Conservatives, which had already lost a lot of ground since the day the Assembly met for the first time in Bordeaux. They will regain it on certain days, and even for a certain time, but the ground itself will already have been transformed. It is true that they had chosen a bad battlefield; they should not have followed Mr. Thiers on the one where he skillfully lured them. The President saw very well that in this Assembly no one other than him had wielded power, no one else had exercised the slightest influence on the policy of his country; he alone was known in France and abroad, and he had the art of making the personal question a political question. The conservatives were unable to separate the political question from this confusion; they too gave themselves the bad appearance of limiting the debate to a personal question. To the organizational proposals made by the President and which should have been very favorably received by a country emerging from two terrible crises, the external crisis and the internal crisis, they only responded by reducing Mr. Thiers' right to intervene in the discussion of the Assembly and making a bill on ministerial responsibility. I've said it before, it was a petty response and a clumsy order of battle; the majority of the Assembly saw only a desire to thwart Mr. Thiers, and they agreed with him.

The offices met on December 5 to appoint a commission responsible for regulating the attributions of public powers and the conditions of ministerial responsibility. The efforts of the right succeeded in having nineteen commissioners assigned to them and leaving only eleven for

the left; 361 votes named the first and 337 the second. It was a small success for the conservatives. The commission worked for a long time, as one can imagine; it is known in the history of the Assembly under the name of the Commission of Thirty; sometimes agree, sometimes in opposition with the President of the Republic, it sat for a long time before achieving anything.

These long and serious discussions did not fail to further excite, in Berlin, the anxieties that I have already mentioned. At that time, we were still conservative in Germany; while strongly wishing Mr. Thiers to remain in power, we were concerned about his tendencies towards the left, we were worried about his progress. This is because the war indemnity had not yet been paid, far from it. But when we have cashed it, we will see the policy of Prince Bismarck prevail, which will consist of maintaining revolutionary agitation in France and encouraging the maintenance of the republic, in order to prevent our country from rising again.

I informed M. de Rémusat, a few days after the discussion I have just reported, of the state of mind in Berlin. There was concern, both in the government and in the diplomatic corps, at the very small gap which existed between the two sides of the Assembly, at the successes achieved on several occasions by the left, certain elements of which were an object of fear for all those who cared about order in Europe, and it was thought that the government of Mr. Thiers, by relying on it, was losing its moral force. The confidences I received from various quarters echoed these concerns. While understanding and sharing them to a certain extent, I considered it a duty to weaken the scope of the fears that I was told. I pointed out the conservative sentiments expressed by the President and which were likely to bring about conciliation between him and the right:

“Mr Thiers,” I said, “did not ask the Assembly to opt for this or that form of government today; merely giving him advice and guidance, he recognized his right to constitute and showed respect for his decisions. The frequent relationships that will lead to long deliberations between him and the commission, the desire on both sides to strengthen the guarantees of order, the obvious advantages of union and the prospect of the dangers that division would entail, finally the very precise desire of the right itself to leave power in the hands of Mr. Thiers, all these powerful considerations will certainly produce the agreement.”

Finally, I was careful not to neglect the observation of a very reassuring symptom, namely that the important discussions which had just taken place had in no way altered the calm, neither in Paris nor in the provinces. “I will not assure M. de Rémusat,” I said, in closing, “that my observations will have complete success; all, however, and especially the last, concerning the calm reigning in France and already recognized by the German press, produce, I believe, a fairly favorable impression. The North German Gazette shows a certain affectation of being more reassured and states that the German government “rejoiced that the current crisis had ended “with the victory of the government”; but this approval, coming from the chancellery, perhaps had no other aim than to stop a controversy in the government press whose ardor and prolongation would lead the French government to believe that Germany was attached to our affairs. internal affairs a greater interest than we wanted to make it appear.”

Besides, the internal situation was going to relax, for a certain time at least; a discussion on the petitions presented to the Assembly to decide it to dissolve will be the occasion, and the repercussions of this improvement will be felt in Germany. The very day this discussion was to begin, December 14, I

was invited to dinner at the Emperor and Empress with other ambassadors, and I was able to collect evidence of the concerns that the events in France caused at court. Here is what I find in my notes on this evening:

After dinner, the Emperor spoke to me about the latest incidents in France and particularly about this day, about the discussion which was to take place in the Assembly, with a mixture of interest and concern. I reassured him, affirming that the discussion would be good, that the majority opposed to the dissolution would be numerous, that it would stop all the projects of the left and the agitation that it wants to maintain. I added that the right would come to an agreement with Mr. Thiers, that the necessity, moreover, was obvious because there was no way for the monarchists to currently create a monarchy; but what she wanted was for Mr. Thiers to walk with her and move away from the left which was so compromising for him. "No doubt," replied the King, smiling, "we must not let him go to Gambetta!"

As I pointed out to the King the difficulties of governing which obliged Mr. Thiers to be careful, sometimes misinterpreted, with all the parties in the Assembly, he continued: "I understand that very well, and for our part here, we are satisfied with Mr. Thiers; impossible to execute one's commitments with greater loyalty and accuracy; we therefore have an interest in him remaining in power."

I highlighted this accuracy by reminding the Emperor that these days we were in the process of paying the end of the third billion, and by informing him that, the very day before, I had announced to M. de Balan our intention to pay another hundred and fifty million from January 15 to 20, which seemed to cause him a very pleasant surprise. "Moreover," I added, "this loyalty to carrying out our commitments is the work of the Assembly as much as that of M. Thiers. If unfortunately this

disappeared, the majority which includes all the conservatives would be there to carry out the same commitments, with as much accuracy and guarantees for Germany. — I completely believe it, continued the Emperor!" I added a few words on the significant progress in the restoration of order in France, on the confidence that the success of our efforts, after so many trials, should inspire in Europe, etc., appreciations whose sincerity seemed to be liked by the Emperor.

A little before speaking with the sovereign, the Empress spoke with me; she was charming, as usual, but with a touch of sadness and distraction. She said to me, in fact, a few sentences which showed a feeling of worry. In Berlin, people were at the moment preoccupied with religious affairs and an important reform of the law of circles which had found much opposition in the House of Lords.

It is a question from the administrative reform of the circles proposed by the Prussian government in 1872 and supplemented, in June 1875, by an ordinance on provincial administration. Adopted by the Chamber of Deputies, this reform was rejected, at the end of October, by the House of Lords, by an overwhelming majority. The members of the lower nobility, who dominated in this Chamber, saw it as an attack on their privileges and their influence. It ruled that the circle, an assembly of several cantons, would be administered by a Landrath who would be appointed by the king and who would be assisted by an elected body, the circle council. It was taking away from the landowners the patrimonial police and justice. So, the King, to pass this reform, had to resort to a promotion of twenty-five peers. It was voted on with difficulty on December 7, by 116 votes to 91.

Both of us, referring to Germany as to France, we said to ourselves that each day added to the perplexities of the present, and she was kind enough to add: "I have thought a lot about you for three weeks, about all this that you felt, suffered." I thanked him with all my heart, and the thought that I let pierce through of the confidence that I had had in the fidelity of his memory, during all the incidents which had arisen in France, seemed to please him. As we took leave of the sovereign, the Empress said a few more words to me full of grace and kindness; the Emperor was, for his part, very cordial.

On December 14, the reports presented on the dissolution of the Assembly were discussed. MM. Gambetta, d'Audiffret-Pasquier, Louis Blanc, Raoul Duval and Dufaure took a brilliant part in the debate. Here is a telegram that one of my secretaries, Mr. Debains, on leave at Versailles, sent me the morning after the discussion.

Versailles, December 15, 1872.

"Seven-hour debate, ended with very conservative and much applauded declarations from Mr. Dufaure, condemning radical agitations. Complete and cordial rapprochement between the right and the government. Agenda pm* and simple voted by 483 votes to 196. Mr. Thiers not coming. Left asked for a reprieve until the tabling of the report of the Commission of Thirty. Dufaure speech will be displayed in all municipalities."

There was indeed some exaggeration in speaking of a "complete and cordial" rapprochement; but it is incontestable that a wind of consensus had blown over the right of the Assembly and over Mr. Thiers, and that harmony was destined to reign for some time between them.

MM. Gambetta and Louis Blanc supported the necessity of dissolution, relying largely on the declarations of

Mr. Thiers' message, on the vote of November 29 and on the observed impotence of establishing the monarchy. They concluded that it was up to another Assembly to constitute the republic. The Duke of Audiffret-Pasquier responded victoriously, with his usual eloquence, to Mr. Gambetta's arguments and ended his speech by extending his hand, in the name of the conservatives, to the government. "In the circumstances in which we find ourselves," he yelled, "we do not want to divide the country, we loyally accept the discussion offered to us on certain organic laws to perfect and consolidate the current state of affairs. But do not ask us to deny our past, nor to take an act of faith that closes the future to us. We postpone our hopes."

Mr. Dufaure declared himself clearly in favor of the right that the Assembly had to dissolve itself when it deemed it appropriate, and he declared loudly that, if the divisions of its members had contributed to worrying the country, the trips of propaganda undertaken by the speakers of the left in the departments, those, in particular, of Mr. Gambetta, were there for all that, which was not saying enough. Recalling the disagreements which had arisen between the government and part of the Assembly, he adroitly represented the vote of November 29 as having ended them, and the study commission responsible for examining the laws of ministerial responsibility and organization of public power as destined - there was every reason to hope, especially after a speech such as that of Duke Pasquier - to bring about resolutions favorable to the pacification of the parties. "Under these conditions," he added, "the dissolution of the National Assembly would bring much more serious embarrassment than the current state of affairs." Finally, he reproached the Republicans, with spirit and vigor, for identifying too much with them the country and the republic and for compromising this

form of government, whose reputation was already very doubtful, by associating it with fatal agitations which created an intolerable state for a country. He ended with an eloquent picture of the ardent desire, superior to any political concern, felt by the people of the countryside and those of the cities to enjoy rest, to have a secure job and the certainty of being able to pass on to their children their field and their house.

Long cheers greeted this speech. The breath which revived was indeed very conservative, very conciliatory and very far from the sullen, irritated tone, or the often equivocal language which had signaled the last harangues of Mr. Thiers. He was very clever at the same time, because the orator had succeeded, by uttering pleasant words to the Assembly, such as this: "the provisional government that we exercise under the name of the French Republic", to make it accept without delay. murmur or contradiction these other words of much greater significance: "the government to which you yourselves gave the name of French Republic in the law of August 31, 1871."

This is the Rivet law, whose first article has been treated with: The chief executive takes the title of president of the French Republic and continues to exercise, under the authority of the National Assembly, until it had completed its work, the functions entrusted to it were enacted by the decree of 17 February 1871.

This law made a provisional constitution of the republic.

The right, for its part, through the organ of the Duke of Audiffret-Pasquier, condemned the vote of November 29 and seemed resigned to making the organic laws demanded by Mr. Thiers. All in all, the politics of the message prevailed, and the conservative republic tried to establish itself.

She did not succeed, however; the fault lies, in large part, I do not hesitate to say, with Mr. Thiers. Probably drawing from his already advanced age a very lively ardor to found the republic before the time marked by the Pact of Bordeaux, leaning towards the left in the fear of not finding on the part of the conservatives the complacency required by his personal and ambitious views, taking no account of the peaceful and conciliatory declarations of Mr. Dufaure, his minister, nor of the support that this speech had obtained in the ranks of the right, for all these causes he repelled the conservatives, and, these moving away from him, he only found support from the left, that is to say, from a small number of exceptions aside, republicans of old rock, led basically by Gambetta and, only in form, by him. As long as he remained the head of the executive power, he had supported the helm of the rudder on their side; once removed from power, he will no longer maintain any restraint, he will even cease his private relations with his former conservative friends and will surrender himself entirely to the republicans, to whom he will entrust the care of his revenge against those who dispossessed him of state leadership.

I have already said it, absent from the Assembly, almost a stranger to its discussions, even stranger to what was happening behind the scenes, where we learn much more about the truth about things and about men than in the deliberation room, insufficiently informed by my friends who, wanting to see in me, out of patriotism, only the diplomat and not the deputy, were careful not to distract my attention from the external situation, influenced perhaps in Berlin, more than I suspected, by the political value that was given to Mr. Thiers and by the very keen desire to see the management of affairs in his hands, I discerned much less well both the faults in general and the attitude of the President than I did many years

later. However, from my first interview with him, when he offered me the embassy in Berlin, and during all the time that I collaborated with him and with his friends, not only did I not conceal, but I keen to note the difference of opinions that separated us. MM. Thiers and de Rémusat, to speak only of the most important people, accepted me like this; I therefore thought I had the right to write to both of them several times, during the main incidents of domestic politics, not to give them *advice* - that is a word that I will not allow myself to say while speaking. of two men as distinguished and as superior to me in age as in business experience, but to signal our dissents, and I made a lot of effort to bring them back to the conservatives.

I come back to the session of December 14. The result that struck minds in Berlin was the reestablishment of agreement between the Assembly and the President, and this result was welcomed with satisfaction. The minister of Württemberg, Baron Spitzemberg, saw a happy symptom in the rapprochement that had taken place that day between Mr. Thiers and the right. M. de Balan, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, expressed the same impression to me even more vividly. Nothing else escaped the attention of the Germans. They had noticed, for example, that Mr. Thiers was not attending the session and they were looking for an explanation. "A few days ago," the Minister of Wimberg told me, "we didn't really know which way Mr. Thiers was leaning; now we are reassured." Mr. de Balan said Thiers sided with Mr. Dufaure. It is the right, conservative side, supported by Dufaure, which is truly the most powerful party, and it is important that Mr. Thiers walks with it. The newspapers, in fact, raised this question: whether Mr. Thiers had approved or disavowed Mr. Dufaure. The radical papers supported the disavowal, and ours, seizing the opinions issued by all the

newspapers, made it the subject of a controversy. But we now know that Mr. Thiers would have said in the last session of the Commission of Thirty that Mr. Dufaure had expressed all his thoughts." And Mr. de Balan welcomed this, regarding this approval as ensuring the end of the crisis and tranquility for the future.

Prince Bismarck came to see me on the 21st, and he was also very satisfied with Mr. Dufaure's conciliatory speech; he understood well what I represented to him about the delicacy of the situation of Mr. Thiers, obliged to spare the parties which were not only in the French Assembly numbering two, as formerly in the English parliament, but which represented several fractions. "His situation has a lot of analogy with mine," he said, "I am obliged to make concessions and considerations; government is only possible under these conditions." He said to me again with a good-day accent, half serene, half cheeky: "The monarchists having not been able to come to an agreement among themselves, I believe that there is no other side for the conservatives to take. than to support the present order of things; you must keep Adolphe I. — Gladly, I replied, but on the condition that he will have no heirs."

The same day, I wrote to Mr. de Rémusat a final letter on this subject: "The last phases of the crisis that began a month ago gave me the opportunity to combat the anxieties that had been raised here. I have not exaggerated anything by writing to you that they existed and that they had developed such as to weaken the moral authority of the French government. While understanding them, I fought them, which was my duty. In Germany, the name Gambetta is the personification of the revolutionary element, and every time the chances of the left seem to increase, we already see Gambetta in power. The King, with whom I dined a few days

ago, made his concerns in this area very clear to me. Prince Bismarck, who is leaving my house just now, said to me: "I am happy with the end of these latest incidents in France and especially with the way in which they ended, because they keep Mr. Thiers away from "Gambetta."

The crisis begun and caused by Mr. Thiers' message was over. Harmony had been re- established between the right of the Assembly and the President, in appearance at least; but basically, dissensions have become more pronounced, mistrust has entered into mutual relations, and we will see from time to time its disastrous effects.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LIBERATION OF THE TERRITORY

Summary of the negotiations and the situation until the end of February 1873.

Persistent hesitation on the part of the German Emperor to withdraw the occupying troops. — Favorable impression caused in Berlin by the rapprochement between the French government and the right — Prince Bismarck announces to Mr. de Gontaut an upcoming agreement on the liberation of the territory. — Restrictive clause of Germany concerning Belfort. — Draft convention drawn up by Mr. Thiers. — Interview between M. de Gontaut, March 8, with Prince Bismarck; the latter complains of the slowness of the Count of Arnim in negotiating; he strives to justify the clause relating to Belfort by the fears inspired in Germany by the internal state of France. — Mr. Thiers guarantees the tranquility of the country. — Proposal made, on March 11, by Prince Bismarck to M. de Gontaut, to substitute Verdun for Belfort as the last post of

occupation. — Ready acceptance from Mr. Thiers. — Satisfactory words from the Emperor to France, March 12, in his speech from the Throne. — Interview, the same day, with Prince Bismarck and M. de Gontaut. — Moved letter from M. de Rémusat. — New interview, March 13, between M. de Gontaut and Prince Bismarck; he is trying to make our ambassador renounce the substitution of Verdun for Belfort. — The Count of Arnim claims to be authorized to sign the treaty at Versailles. — Denial inflicted on him by Prince Bismarck. — The grand cordon of the Legion of Honor conferred on M. de Gontaut. — Agitated dispatch from Mr. Thiers. — Supreme effort attempted in vain by Prince Bismarck on Mr. de Gontaut to retake Belfort and signing of the treaty in Berlin, March 15. — Reception, the same evening, of the Emperor and the Empress at the French embassy. — Reasons that Prince Bismarck would have had to hasten the conclusion of the treaty. — Letter to Mr. de Gontaut from Mr. Thiers, where he inaccurately explains his own role in the Belfort question. — Discussion and refutation of this letter. — Letter from M. de Rémusat. — Comments received by M. de Gontaut on the Count of Arnim. — A dinner with Mr. Thiers; congratulations received there by M. de Gontaut; impressions he brings back on domestic politics.

We have seen that the convention of June 29, 1872 left six departments to German occupation: Marne, Haute-Marne, Ardennes, Vosges, Meuse, Meurthe-et-Moselle and the district of Belfort.

Mr. de Gontaut, in the story of the negotiations which were to lead to the definitive and complete liberation of French territory, was more or less limited, until the moment when we resumed the publication of his text, to simply reproducing, in chronological order and

without attaching no comments, the letters exchanged by him with Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat. These letters being almost all published in the two volumes of correspondence entitled Occupation and liberation of the territory, we did not consider it useful to reprint them here. We are content to take the reader, through a brief summary of the facts and a few extracts from this correspondence, until the date where we give the floor again to the author.

Under the terms of this agreement, Marne and Haute-Marne were evacuated during the month of November 1872, following a first payment of five hundred million out of the three billion remaining due to Germany.

The successive terms granted by the convention for the discharge of the entire debt extended until March 1, 1875; but the government found itself ready to get ahead of them. The anticipation of payments naturally led to the anticipation of evacuation, and this is what all the efforts of Mr. Thiers. He soon thought of starting talks with Germany on this subject.

As early as January 15, 1873, he wrote to Mr. de Gontaut that he would be able to pay the fourth billion in April and that he would have in hand the value of the fifth for at least three quarters. But he believed he sensed that the German government was not disposed to hasten the evacuation, and he requested the ambassador to ascertain the fact and to unravel its causes.

There were several. The first and, undoubtedly, the most important was the fear, simulated or sincere, which the events of our internal politics inspired in Germany, the quarrels of the President with the National Assembly, following his famous message of November 13. The Emperor of Germany feared the fall of M. Thiers, the coming to power of Gambetta,

the revolutionary unrest, the war of revenge, and this is what made him reluctant to relinquish the four departments and the territory of Belfort which he still occupied as security for the payment of the debt. Order in France being, in his eyes, the indispensable guarantee of his debt and peace, the army of occupation seemed necessary to him to maintain it in case of need.

However, the internal situation of France did not seem likely to improve. After the momentary reconciliation which had occurred in the session of December 14, the government and the right had soon resumed their attitude of distrust towards each other. The month of January and a good part of February were spent in a painful struggle between the government and the Commission of Thirty, searching in vain for "*common ground*" and expending a lot of ingenuity to arrive at what Mr. Thiers called "*chinoiseries*".

The efforts of the government were aimed at establishing, in broad terms, a republican constitution; those of the commission tended to reject any definitive solution which would commit the future and rule out, from now on, any hope of monarchical restoration.

These disagreements had their counter-effect in Berlin; they compromised the success of the negotiations initiated with a view to the imminent liberation of the territory. The Emperor of Germany was concerned, and Prince Bismarck, who did not share his sovereign's fears, was unable to allay them.

All the impressions produced in Germany by the events of our internal politics are faithfully noted by Mr. de Gontaut in the very active correspondence which he then exchanged with his government, and this is what makes this correspondence particularly interesting. The excellent position that our ambassador had acquired in Berlin through his tact and his

dignity, the relations he maintained with the court put him in a position to receive many confidences, such as those of the Count of Redern, grand chamberlain and friend of the Emperor, or to have interesting and meaningful conversations with the latter.

“A few moments after his arrival at my house,” he wrote, on February 1, “to Mr. Thiers, [the Count of Redern] addressed the question of the internal situation of France. In his eyes, which is equivalent to saying in the eyes of the King, the extension of the occupation would be very useful in preventing revolutionary agitations. These would most likely occur after the departure of the Prussian troops.

I understood there the reason for the King's opposition to the negotiation relating to financial guarantees and I found at the same time the opinion that the Count of Arnim had expressed to me eight or ten months ago. I had fought her then, while not refusing her a certain value apart from myself; even more so have I fought it today since I no longer find it justified.

I told Count Redern that I believed him to be ill-informed; that internal peace had made very significant progress in recent months; that everything that was happening in France proved it; that the punctuality, even more, the anticipation of the payment of the indemnity irrefutably proved that order and peace were being consolidated in France; for, if it were otherwise, there would be no work, no transaction of any kind, consequently no money; that in Berlin, each time I had discussions on the occupation of our territory by German troops, people agreed with me on the dangers that the prolonged presence of these troops in France would ultimately bring; that for me therefore and for all those who desired peace, the imminent withdrawal of the occupying body would

be the most assured guarantee. I also reminded the Count of Redern that, following the very terms of the peace treaty, the occupation, especially that of the last six departments and Belfort, had been requested by Germany and accepted by France, as a guarantee of payment of the indemnity, but that it had no other purpose.

"Count Redern did not contradict these assessments, far from it. But he returned to the immense dangers that the triumph of the left in France and of Gambetta would pose to all of Europe, and he warmly expressed to me the hope that an agreement would be reached between Mr. Thiers and the right. He went so far as to tell me: "This is the King's keen desire, and believe me that if things work out, there will be no difficulties on his part regarding the withdrawal of the troops." I replied that the hopes on this point were very well founded.

"In politics," I added, "we must not use the word certainty lightly; but the tendencies towards conciliation have been too marked in recent weeks, they are becoming too accentuated every day, they are too necessary and too reasonable for it not to be entirely consistent with logic to say: the agreement will be made."

"So much the better," replied Count de Redern; but I tell you with confidence: *Everything depends on Mr. Thiers. "Germany's agreement with France is in its hands."*

I had your last two letters on my desk. I did not hesitate, to encourage his hopes and to prove to him that he should have confidence in you, to offer to read them to him. He accepted with gratitude, and reminding me that last year I had already read him a very interesting and good one, he added that he had made it known to the King. I read to him what you wrote to me concerning your firm desire to faithfully and strictly fulfill all the commitments that France had contracted, "to pay everything down to the last penny and then

to ensure peace," your desires to conciliation and your conviction "that understanding would be established and that you would reach an agreement with the Commission of Thirty." I gave him the book again insurance policy that you give me the absolute existence of material order and the re-establishment of moral order, based on the need felt by the country, for rest, calm, work; of the increasingly rapid decline of Gambetta's chances, etc., etc.; finally, wanting to give him an exact and in-depth knowledge of you, I ended with these words which are the last of your letter of January 20: "I will be very happy to find rest again after the honor of having liberated our soil and restored financial balance. Besides, count on the fact that I will do my duty to the end, and that of all the conservatives, I will always be the strongest and most devoted."

Count Redern seemed very impressed by this language; grateful for my testimony of confidence and convinced, with good reason, that confidential and private letters revealed to him exactly, truly, all your thoughts, he said to me: "Before two days, the King will be aware of what you've read me."

Count of Redern kept his promise. There was a big ball last night at the Opera; the imperial family, the diplomatic corps, the entire court attended. In the middle of the ball the Emperor came to pay a visit to the ambassadors and ministers in the boxes which had been reserved for them, and he remained there for around ten minutes. As I was leaving, the Emperor approached me, and, with great good grace and an air of visible satisfaction, he said to me:

"The Count of Redern spoke to me about two letters from Mr. Thiers that you kindly communicated to him and "told me what was there." It's excellent, I'm delighted. — Yes, Sire, I replied, Mr. Count of Redern came to see me, and the

conversation having come to fall upon our mutual relations, in order to prove to him what were the true feelings of Mr. Thiers, what were his intentions, the very basis of his thoughts, I thought I couldn't do anything simpler and clearer than the time to read to him two letters that I had there, which were written for me alone and were certainly not intended to be shown. He therefore saw how right I was in maintaining that the government only aimed at two things, the re-establishment of order, peace; by responding, if it could be necessary, to the conservative sentiments of Mr. Thiers and by saying that we should have "complete confidence in him. "Certainly," replied the Emperor; "but it is not today that I do justice to Mr. Thiers, to his great talents, to the efforts he made to overcome the disorder, to the direction he gave to business in general."

I reminded the King more or less of what I had said to Count de Redern, assuring him that there was no serious fear in France for the material order, that an agreement was close to being made between the commission of the Thirty and you, and that I had confidence, not only for the present, but for the future; that in truth, we could still have some difficulties, but that there was no country (the King knew this as well as I) that did not have its internal difficulties, which he agreed with a smile.

This very day, Sire, I announced to your government a new payment of one hundred and fifty million for the beginning of March. — It's wonderful! cried the Emperor. — At the beginning of May, I think, four billion will be paid in full, and then we will be able to begin payment of the fifth billion or else come to an agreement with the government of Your Majesty on the financial guarantees which it depends on him, moreover, to accept. "We will see then," said the King, still in a tone of great cordiality; "everything must be settled in its time."

This last word warned me that the Emperor did not wish to address this question today. The inappropriateness of the moment, the lack of instructions from you on this point, finally the desire not to seem to attach too great importance to it, everything decided me not to insist.

In summary, the Emperor had told me enough to make me see that I had been well informed when I was told that the objections to the upcoming settlement of the question of financial guarantees came from him; but I left him favorably impressed with the state of things in France and with an upcoming agreement between all the conservatives, finally confident in you.

I saw the King again this morning at a charity sale (this is a real newspaper that I am sending you). I spoke to him about the impressions that the party the previous evening had left on me and the expressions of respect and affection that were offered to him by a large crowd and of almost all the conditions that crowded into the theater. "It is a spectacle which one could not witness everywhere," I added; it is quite obvious that this country is still monarchical." - *Again!!!* "You are right to say this," replied the King with a melancholy smile; because "things move quickly in our time. What will the future be like?"

While leaving the King, I met again the Count of Redern who reiterated to me, in the name of the King, everything he had told me and what His Majesty had told me himself. The Grand Chamberlain, very struck by your letters, highlighted to the King the eminent services you have rendered to the restoration of order and our internal prosperity, and both were in perfect agreement on this point. The Emperor also understands very well the efforts you are making to reorganize imposing military forces; he says you need it to maintain order in France.

I thought it necessary to note, in passing, this assertion which appears to be a fixed preoccupation of the Emperor. I therefore repeated that without doubt we must have certain forces to prepare for eventualities from within, but that the perils from this side became less threatening every day; that our situation as a great power required us to have an army, not with a view to taking the offensive (which was a hundred leagues from our thoughts), but to be on a respectable defensive footing, something all the more so. It was natural that all the powers of Europe created immense armies. "I understand you," replied Count de Redern; it must be admitted, "it is a calamity that these considerable armaments are being made on all sides. We talked about it here in the interview; but no one bothered to disarm and find themselves perhaps inferior to their neighbors; each declared that he wanted to *sweep the front of his house himself!*"

I told the Count of Redern about my conversation the day before with the King, and I told him my satisfaction at the good dispositions in which I had found Her Majesty. Since we opened ourselves so frankly to each other, I continued, there was a word in the language of His Majesty which did not ring very well in my ears: We must settle "everything in its time," he told me, when I touched upon, very lightly it is true, the question of guarantees. This word accuses the King of a remnant of distrust which is not really founded, and I rely on you to combat it. We must do everything in the world to destroy "distrust on both sides." Don't you know that at home, in our country itself, we also have to fight it? So, how many people from France write to me that "you will attack us again when we have paid you the balance of the war indemnity!"

M. de Redern cried out: "Attacking you again?" But why? Where would our interest be in doing so? No, "no, don't believe it!" — I am also convinced, I repeat, that these are

false and bad inspirations which dictate these words; the government doesn't believe it. But I want to prove to you by this that, on both sides, there still exist mistrust which we must also apply, through good methods, to make disappear. This is our work every day; it will be yours too, I am convinced of it."

He was very much in the same vein.

As we parted, the Count of Redern said to me: "When you have something that you want to make happen to the King, make use of me, do not hesitate to do it." And he took advantage of this opportunity to tell me flattering things that his master had said to him about me, and which I would repeat to you all the less since it is always appropriate, in such a matter, to make room for politeness and banalities that well-raised people exchange with each other, if they did not, I believe, indicate to you to a certain extent that the situation which has been created for me by the benevolence of the King can bring between him and me useful connections to the goal that we are pursuing in common, therefore, to the good of our country.

The Emperor would have told him, among other things, that having accepted the mission that I fulfilled, after the events of the war, and when the system that existed in France was not that which my opinions indicated, he inspired a double confidence in me, that he had faith in everything I told him. The Emperor is right, if I am not mistaken, to believe me to be a man of honor; but I do not deny that this good opinion increases the delicacies of my situation with him.

Eight days ago, Bleichröder spoke to me about the mistrust that the Emperor had regarding our future, and he urged me, when I met him, to speak to him about these things and to reassure him. I believe that he would not have dared to give me this advice if he had not at least been authorized to do so by his boss. But the latter is very umbrageous, and, without renouncing occasionally follow the indication given, it seemed

prudent to me to answer him that, in a country as constitutional as Prussia was or was becoming, it was with the Minister of Foreign Affairs that we usually spoke things from politics; that I had believed and that I believed even more appropriate to stick to this custom, which would certainly not prevent me from following Her Majesty on the ground where she would like to call me and from taking advantage of the opportunities that she would offer me herself.

Please send me your instructions. Perhaps I will have to take the opportunity to speak to the King a little later when I know what you want. But wouldn't I need, at the same time, to know your thoughts on the future of the current Assembly, on the time of its dissolution, etc., etc.? In a word, it seems necessary to me, for the good conduct of the negotiations that I could be called upon to undertake, for my own direction, that you are willing to speak to me with an open heart.

This is a very long letter. It's after three in the morning, and I want to send our mail by the first train on Sunday. I will not tell you how hard it is to have to deal so often with all the expiations of this unfortunate war, to reassure our internal situation, to give hopes of order and calm to ungenerous enemies, but powerful and very shady. I won't say anything about it because no one feels these pains more than you; your courage is a good stimulus for mine.

Farewell, dear Mr. President; I hope, in writing to you, that all your predictions of reconciliation and peace are realized. The Delacour amendment seems very satisfactory to me in substance; I hope, if you especially value it, that it will have been the basis of the agreement."

The discussions between Mr. Thiers and the Trents concerned two points: the organization of ministerial responsibility and the development of constitutional laws. We were then at the height of the debates on the

first of these questions. To prevent a ministerial crisis from transforming into a presidential crisis, the majority of the commission tended to shield the person of the President of the Republic from parliamentary questioning, and, consequently, to eliminate, or, at least, limit his intervention from the podium of the Assembly. The amendment proposed by Mr. Delacour, who was part of the republican minority of the commission, was one of the combinations imagined to resolve the problem. extreme limit of the concessions he agreed to make, proposed in the commission session of January 25, it was as follows: "The President of the Republic may be heard in the interpellations which will have as their subject acts involving the general policy of the Republic. government, either externally or internally, when they have been deliberated in the Council of Ministers and countersigned by the Vice-President of the Council." It was rejected, on January 27, by 16 votes to 10. The agreement between M. Thiers and the commission finally had their say as follows: If the question relates to foreign policy, the president always has the right to be heard by the Assembly. If the question relates to internal policy, this right is subject to a declaration by the Council of Ministers made before the opening of the discussion and stating that the questions raised relate to the general policy of the government and engage the responsibility of the President. Before using his right, the President informs the Assembly, by a message, of his intention to be heard. This then suspends the discussion. The president is heard the next day, unless a special vote decides that he will be heard the same day. The session is adjourned after his

speech and the discussion resumes, without his presence, later.

"... I have to tell you, wrote Mr. de Gontaut to Mr. Thiers on February 6, that I hear from almost all sides this opinion or this fear, that the evacuation will be the signal of revolutionary agitations in France. I do not need to tell you that I am fighting these apprehensions with all my strength, and I hope not to be contradicted by events. These fears are partly sincere; it is also very possible that they are peddled in interested views, that is to say for a reason, otherwise to not execute the treaty, at least to evacuate as late as possible. I observe this point carefully.

I believe it is very desirable to finally see the agreement between you and the Commission of Thirty concluded. It would make the best impression here. I don't allow myself to judge anyone. I just want to say that the slowness of the solution is unfortunate. Whatever the cause, it is regrettable. You say that you are being "harassed". I blame them and would like more width in the views. But since I do everyone their part, I will repeat that the left's affectation of being alone devoted to you, of serving you, of going to report to you what it is doing, in a word, of seeming to take the word of order at home, is pitiful and can only produce a very unfortunate effect here. What would be surprising is if foreign governments, the German government in particular, were not struck to see you supported by all the newspapers which are the ardent defenders of revolutionaries. Moreover, almost all the newspapers, whatever party they belong to, support, in my opinion, a deplorable controversy..."

Mr. de Gontaut was not content to press Mr. Thiers to get closer to the right. He also preached to his political friends

and urged them to be accommodating, to make sacrifices on points which were not of capital importance, to protect Mr. Thiers' self-esteem, which was appreciated abroad. the qualities of a statesman and who were desired, for the moment at least, to be in power. It is in this sense that he addressed, on February 13, to a royalist deputy from Maine-et-Loire, Mr. de Gumont, the following letter:

My dear friend,

I have no need to tell you, I think, with what interest and with what anxieties I follow the work of the Commission of the Thirty. I am happy and reassured to see you included; but let me tell you my impressions, because it will not be useless to know them because of the place where I find myself.

You are losing the ground you have gained over the last four months.

In the German government, as in most foreign governments unsympathetic to the proclamation of the republic, even a conservative one, we applauded your resolution to make conservative influences dominate in the direction of affairs, and the firmness with which you have demonstrated to keep the government on this ground. We feared the actions of the left and the influence that its adroit flatteries could exercise over the President; Mr. Thiers' union with the right was viewed very favorably. But Mr. Thiers' foreign policy, his efforts to restore order at home, to rebuild the finances and even the army, inspired real sympathy for him, even sincere admiration and, in short, a great confidence in himself. We are therefore not disposed to approve everything which seems intended to diminish his personality, to diminish the powers whose use we agree to praise that he has made until now, even less anything which could lead to

resign from the presidency. Without doubt, if foreigners were concerned about our affairs in the same spirit, with the same interest, from the same point of view as us, the general judgment they make could well be modified; but they only judge on the whole; they are especially struck by the punctuality which governs the immense payments of the war indemnity, without having even caused a monetary crisis; they see the progress of the material order, the reorganization of the services which had been compromised by the foreign war and the civil war, and they attribute the merits of all these things to the President almost exclusively. They therefore do not understand the long and subtle discussions of the Commission of Thirty; they are surprised that so much value is attached to establishing normal, balanced institutions for an abnormal and obviously transitory situation and circumstances; they begin to worry about these prolonged dissidences whose importance they do not understand; they fear the effects from the point of view of internal peace, and they accuse the majority of the commission, that is to say the right, of hindering the agreement so desired by them between the conservatives and Mr. Thiers.

I am not saying that they are completely right, that they embrace all sides of our situation; I am only letting you know about their assessments. It is not from you that I will learn their value and the need to take them into account.

You will easily believe that in my conversations I always seek to correct erroneous judgments, to highlight good intentions as well as the dangers which escape the notice of strangers; you will also understand all the reserve that I must bring to my words. One of the most important goals of my mission is to reassure Germany, not only about the payment of its debt, but also about the appeasement of minds, which results in the resumption of business, on the return of

tranquility to France, at least to make clear all the reasons for the hope we have of achieving the enjoyment of these goods. Do not make my task more difficult than it is and will be in any case; be certain that all these negotiated concessions, this mood manifested on all sides, the prolongation and accentuation of the disagreement, particularly in the last sessions of the commission, produce here an unfortunate effect of which we cannot fail to suffer the repercussions in the negotiations relating to the liberation of the territory.

A big question will be debated these days in the Reichstag, the reform of the military budget which the government wants to increase. So far, we believe that the project will raise objections, that it will arouse discontent; in a word, the proposed expenses may well not be voted on; it will be quite different if divisions and, consequently, agitations reign in France.

Therefore, exercise great prudence and moderation in your resolutions. I repeat to you: I do not claim that my assessments must dominate exclusively, but I give them to you as an important element of your decisions. I know what you fear, I understand what you want, I weigh the responsibility that you also have to bear in your capacity as deputy, and from this distance I do not pose as the absolute judge of what you must do. But I observe that since the re-entry of the Chamber, what you considered to be the essential thing, the break of the government with the radicals, Mr. Dufaure's speech gave it to you. Don't lose the fruits. You rightly wanted to organize a serious ministerial responsibility; then the Assembly decided that it would at the same time take care of regulating the attributions of public authorities. However, it is impossible to evade the full execution of the commitments made. If you do not give in on all points, you will be right; but consider the exceptional circumstances in which

we find ourselves, do not abandon the principal for the accessory. Besides, we are only too certain of the answer to this question: what else can we do at the present time?

You do not doubt my opinions and my feelings, my dear friend. You are aware that I remain united to you in the functions that I accepted, I dare say, out of devotion to our country. When I feared Mr. Thiers' movements towards the left, I warned him in all frankness - and, perhaps, my warnings were not in vain. Today it is my friends that I warn in the name of interests that I am better able to judge than them..."

The need for understanding was also recognized by the two parties present. Mr. de Rémusat insisted on this in a letter to Mr. de Gontaut, dated February 16:

"...Mr. de Bismarck is not ill-disposed towards us; he continues to write letters to Mr. de Manteuffel in which he expresses the desire to soon get rid of the occupation of France. This affair, the first of all, is still on track, and I only see an accident or an unforeseen mistake which could hinder its progress.

We are well informed here in this regard. The Assembly knows better the responsibility that would attach to it if, through secondary demands, it compromised the main work and weakened confidence in the government, confidence which is its only strength at home and abroad. If we doubt for a moment the solidity of Mr. Thiers' government, and all is lost. He is also in an excellent, serene and conscious mood. We all feel the need to avoid dissidence and especially not to see dissidence as a rupture."

The good dispositions of Prince Bismarck were not, as we have seen, shared by the Emperor. The Ghancheher worked to calm his fears, to overcome his irresolution; but it

took time and patience. Each time he left the sovereign's house, according to Mr. de Bleichröder, he was in a great state of fatigue and nervousness, because of some efforts very often fruitless he did to convince him. Also Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat placed great hope on the good relations between the Emperor and Mr. de Gontaut. The President invited him not to let opportunities to act usefully on him slip away. "It is when you see the King face to face that your persuasive words will have their full effect

Mr. Thiers went so far as to propose to Mr. de Gontaut an approach which seemed to the latter to be "a bit in the realm of fantasy": it was about the rumor that Belfortne would never be returned to France.

"I am mulling over in my head all the ways to go about getting out of this, and I have imagined one which I am submitting to you and which will only have to be used when we are closer to the events, but before having paid the third billion: it would be to go to the King, to address his honor as a king, in the name of your honor as a gentleman, and to say to him: "Sire, you are better than a great king, "you are an honest man; I am an honest man too. "Well, would I deceive my country by telling it that it can pay, and that, with the money given, we will give it back its territory, all of its territory?" And I am sure that the accent of an honest man like you will be all-powerful too, and that by having the word of the King himself given to a perfectly honest man, we will be able to transform the substance of our country to have its territory. You see that my confidence in you is absolute..."

"There is much to be gained from the interview you had with the Emperor," wrote M. de Rémusat, for his part, "and

allow me also to congratulate you on the tact and timeliness, of the measure and clarity with which you conducted this conversation, in my eyes, of great importance... I only regret one thing, and that is that you cannot have a similar conversation with the prince of Bismarck... If success meets our wishes, you will have your good share in this success..."

Another obstacle to the successful completion of the negotiations was the ill will of the German ambassador in Paris, Count of Arnim. He delayed in transmitting to Prince Bismarck or only transmitted to him unfaithfully the proposals of Mr. Thiers. The Chancellor was surprised and irritated by this sluggishness, until the day when, discovering the double game of the Count of Arnim, he decided to actively push the negotiations himself through the intermediary of General de Manteuffel and the Count of Saint-Vallier, commissioner of the French government in Nancy near the commander-in-chief of the occupation corps.

Through all these difficulties, however, views were able to be exchanged between Prince Bismarck and the President of the Republic. The state of the question was as follows:

After the payment of the fourth billion, which France was ready to make in May, Germany was required to evacuate the Vosges and the Ardennes. But as the convention of June 29 had not formally stipulated any proportional reduction in the strength of the occupation corps,

In Article 6 of the said convention, this reduction was only envisaged as a possibility. It was not promised by Germany. (Cf. p. 141, note 1)

it resulted that the troops housed in the Vosges and the Ardennes would join those who were already installed in Meurthe-et-Moselle and in the Meuse, and that thus these two departments alone would support the crushing weight of an

army of fifty thousand men. It was an unacceptable measure, and one that General de Manteuffel himself advised his government against. Mr. Thiers therefore proposed another solution. He was able to promise full payment of the fifth and final billion of the compensation by September 1, 1873. Total evacuation was then legal. He offered to delay that of the Vosges and the Ardennes, but, as a reward for this extension of partial occupation, we would anticipate the total evacuation by an equal amount of time.

"We will have waited for May and June," he wrote, on February 23, to the Count of Saint-Vallier, "for the departments of Vosges and Ardennes, and we will anticipate by two months, July and August, for the evacuation of the two departments of Meuse, Meurthe-et- Moselle, district of Belfort."

Belfort's question was intended to raise difficulties. It was rumored that after the debt was fully paid, the Germans would take a pretext to refuse Belfort and make war on us. Mr. Thiers did not believe in this "Infamy". "But I behave," he said, "like Fontenelle, who was asked if he believed in ghosts and who said that he did not believe in them, but that he was afraid of them." We will see the important place that Belfort held until the end in the negotiations. It is on this subject that Mr. Thiers proposed to Mr. de Gontaut this visit to the Emperor which was discussed in a previous note.

Around the time this letter was written, the main obstacle to negotiations seemed to be disappearing. On February 19, Mr. Thiers and the Commission of Thirty agreed on the terms of the report to be presented to the Assembly, and on February 21, the Duke de Broglie read it to it. The transaction concluded reserved for the future questions of principle and form of government. The discussion opened in a

public session on February 27, and ended on March 13 with the vote on the bill to which Mr. Thiers and the commission ended up supporting.

We know that the majority which voted for this transaction was made up of almost the entire center right united with the center left and that almost the entire right - extreme right and moderate right - and the left rejected it. The majority comprised 407 votes and the minority 225. The proposals of the Thirty seemed to the members of the right to imply, rightly or wrongly, the denial of their principles, and that is why they rejected them; "but once these proposals were voted on, their support, previously acquired for all salutary measures, would not have been lacking in a serious and lasting understanding between Mr. Thiers and the conservatives. Unfortunately, instead of strengthening, the barely formed agreement broke down. It was concluded in March; in April, the Assembly, according to its custom, took a short vacation; When she returned in May, following complementary elections in Paris and Lyon, our disagreement with Mr. Thiers reawakened and quickly became more heated." (Vicomte de Meaux, Souvenirs politiques, p. 91).

The President of the Republic, in his letter to Mr. de Gontaut dated February 20, welcomed his rapprochement with the right:

Our business is going very well. Yesterday, we finally reached an agreement with the Thirty, and the report will be tabled tomorrow... The main stone that stood in your way has been removed and I hope that the tank of the negotiation will work. You can tell the King that his wishes are satisfied, and

that lasting calm will reign in our affairs and, consequently, in his."

The chariot of negotiation would not take long, in fact, to set off quite quickly, although the Emperor still persisted for some time in his concerns and his indecision.

February 25,

We take up here the text of M. de Gontaut.

I had the honor of meeting the King at an evening and I had taken this opportunity, very short indeed, to talk to him about our affairs. The next day, I went to the Grand Chamberlain and had a conversation with him, which I addressed to Mr. Thiers a report which I reproduce here according to my notes:

I reported to the Grand Chamberlain my conversation the day before with the Emperor; I asked him to return with his master to the subjects which had been touched upon rather than explored in depth between us. I shared with him my satisfaction with the agreement reached between Mr. Thiers and the Commission of the Thirty, reminding him that I had never doubted it, but that I believed it essential for our country, to which it ensured internal peace. This agreement between the conservative majority and the President should calm the King's fears about our situation, and I hoped that it would convince His Majesty to be easy on financial guarantees, and, in any case, on a rapid and complete evacuation of French territory. I read to him the last letter from Mr. Thiers, in order to increase the authority of my assertions, and this seemed to give him great pleasure. But Count Redern again insisted on the feeling which pushed the King to delay as much as he could the withdrawal of his troops, that is to say the fear that revolutionary agitations would break out immediately after their

departure. I endeavored to prove to the Grand Chamberlain that, far from achieving the goal proposed by the King, the extension of the stay of German troops in France would only provoke the agitations that he so feared.

"The prolonged occupation," I told him, "must necessarily generate discontent among us which could lead to conflicts in given circumstances. In France we are awaiting the application of this part of the treaty which provides for the substitution of financial guarantees for territorial occupation after the payment of the fourth billion. No doubt we are in a position to pay the greater part of the fifth billion in cash; If we delay this operation, it is in order to avoid a monetary crisis which would affect all of Europe, that is to say Germany as well as France. Would we like to provoke it? Would we want to ignore the accuracy of the payments of this small indemnity, by prolonging an occupation which - do not forget - has never been considered in our two countries except as a guarantee of payment? We could not respond, in this case, to discontent probably emerging from the very platform of the Assembly, and thereby capable of compromising the peaceful relations that we want to establish and maintain between France and Germany. You therefore see that the prolongation of the occupation would have precisely the opposite results to those desired by the Emperor."

I then explained to him, in a few words, the plan proposed by Mr. Thiers to Count d'Arnim, and which consists of carrying out the withdrawal of the German troops in one go, a little beyond the end of the complete acquittal of the fourth billion, that is to say around mid-July, and before the full payment of the fifth billion. Count Redern seemed struck by my reasons; he asked me to repeat to him when we wanted the land evacuated. I replied to him that the month of July seemed to me a time advanced enough to fully guarantee the

outstanding debts still owed on the last billion, and suitable, at the same time, to satisfy France which was certainly showing good will by not demanding, before this same time in July, the evacuation of the two departments which was due to us after the payment of the fourth billion. The Grand Chamberlain promised me to speak to the King about it, himself supporting the reasons that I had explained to him and which seemed very just to him. "But," he added, "do not expect the King to be persuaded at once; we must give these good reasons time to mature in our minds; and it will happen, I have confidence."

In the evening of that same day, I met the Count of Redern; he had seen the King during the day and told him about the interview with which His Majesty had honored me the day before. "But the King barely responded," the count told me, "and that doesn't surprise me at all; because Prince Bismarck himself complains of the difficulties he experiences in convincing him."

Two days later, that is to say in full discussion, in Versailles, of the bill on the attributions of public powers, I found in my notes that the Count of Redern wanted to know my opinion on what was being done in the Assembly. I expressed to him my satisfaction with the speeches of Mr. Dufaure and the Duke de Broglie, with the unity of views established between the government and the majority, and all the hopes that this agreement should give us. The count, for his part, received a similar impression from reading these speeches; but it seemed to me that he was going a little hastily and deluding himself when he saw the adoption of the bill as the preface to the return of the monarchy. I told him that one of the advantages of the project was undoubtedly to leave the door open to the monarchy, but that we should not hide from ourselves the impossibility of doing anything in this direction at present. Count Redern agreed. He also told me how much he

was struck by the distinction of the men who stood out on the right, and cited among others the Duke de Broglie and the Duke Audiffret-Pasquier. I could only echo him on this point.

On March 4, I attended an evening at Princess Radziwill's house where the King and Queen had come. The Queen returned to the usual subject of her conversations with me, the doings of mutual friends, mainly the beautiful and friendly Princess of Sayn-Wittgenstein whom she loves dearly and who was leaving for Rome. As I then went to chat with one of the ladies of the diplomatic corps, Baroness de Koenneritz, the King came and sat down near her and me. I wanted to stay standing; the King forced me to sit down and he told me, on this subject, that in 1848, in Frankfurt, at an evening like this, the representative of France persisted in standing, despite the efforts of his brother, the King of Prussia, said to him: "Sire, although serving the Republic, I have not gotten rid of my monarchical memories." The King then said to me: "Well, Mr. Thiers will speak tomorrow." I replied in the affirmative and asked Her Majesty if she had read Mr. Dufaure's excellent speech. "Certainly," replied, "he is very good." And as I highlighted to him the importance of the renewed declarations of Mr. Dufaure, the agreement noted by his language between him and the Duke de Broglie, rapporteur and organ of the Commission of the Thirty, he expressed the satisfaction that he caused this understanding, the confidence it gave him in the future and the confidence he placed "without hesitation" in the conservative sentiments of Mr. Thiers. The conversation then turned to other subjects and lasted about twenty minutes; the King showed a lot of cheerfulness and good nature.

I had the honor to dine the next day with him and the Queen, at the house of the English ambassador to whom we wanted to make a sort of reparation for a ball prepared at his

home and, so to speak, canceled by the Emperor himself, upon the news of the death of one of the imperial empresses of Austria. The sovereigns had been kind enough to designate me among the guests of this dinner with my colleagues from Austria and Russia and their wives, the prince and princess of Bismarck, the baron of Schleinitz, minister of the king's household and his wife, later Countess Wolkenstein, Prince and Princess Antoine Radziwill and Colonei Walker-Beauchamp, military attaché of England.

These same days, the matter of the liberation of the territory and the payment of compensation took a decisive turn.

I dined on March 1st with the Chancellor; I was sitting next to him. Towards the middle of the dinner, I came to mention the name of M. Thiers in conversation; he leaned towards me and said in a low voice: "I think I can tell you that we agree, to one point, with Mr. Thiers, on the conditions that he proposed to us through the intermediary of Count of Arnim. To avoid embarrassment as well as the expenses that would entail successive evacuations, our troops will leave at the beginning of July all your territory, with the exception of Belfort and its canton which we will keep until the perfect payment of the fifth billion, which will take place in the month of September, following Mr. Thiers' forecasts. It's not quite finished, but I have to see the Emperor again tomorrow, and I have every reason to hope that I will obtain his consent. Forgive me for this little political aside in the middle of a dinner, he added graciously, but I wanted to give you the scoop on this news without delay."

It was not all that that we wanted: the retention of a point of the territory instead of the evacuation at once, and this retention relating to Belfort, this was a reservation which was very sensitive to us; but, although there were not many

illusions to be had about concessions on the part of Germany, this would perhaps not be its last word; we were going to negotiate. Whatever he read about it, I was satisfied - and I was sure that my government would be - at the very imminent prospect of determining this serious question, which has occupied and worried us, for two years, in a way quite consistent with the wishes from France. I therefore warmly thanked Prince Bismarck; but I mixed with my thanks some regrets about the exception relating to Belfort, and I did not hide from him that this was a point which kept France's concerns alive. "I cannot do otherwise," replied the Chancellor, smiling, "than to reckon with the military party; but the evacuation of the last portion of your territory will be very clearly stipulated for the time when the last payment of the fifth billion will be made."

The accent with which Prince Bismarck pronounced these words inspired me, I do not hesitate to say, for the execution of this stipulation, with a confidence that I had not felt until now. I did not insist further, it was not the place, I thanked him again and added that I considered the total evacuation as an event likely to pacify minds in France and strengthen the government. "I share this confidence with you," continued the Chancellor.

The same evening, I hastened to transmit the news confidentially to Versailles. The next day, I wrote all the details of my interview the day before to Mr. Thiers and to Mr. de Rémusat. Here is an excerpt from my letter to the President:

"You must have received the telegram that I hastened to send to you on my return from Prince Bismarck. I am writing today to Mr. de Rémusat, with a few details, the report of my interview... I have little to add to it. The prince was very friendly all evening: he even told me that the newspapers had claimed that he and I were on bad terms and that he had sent Mr.

d'Arnim a letter without wasting time. (or a telegram?) to tell him that this was "an abominable lie".

The Chancellor was referring, probably, to a fairly lively debate which had taken place in Parliament and in the newspapers, concerning the accusation he had brought against Count X..., a Catholic and one of the Queen's chamberlains, of maintaining religious agitation in Silesia for money. Bleichröder had confided to me that the Chancellor, believing me - I don't know why - to be involved in this affair and the inspiration for the French newspapers which had presented it in an unfortunate light, was very irritated with me, but that since then he had admitted the falsity of the information which had been given to him. I was very little moved by this false accusation. (G.-B.)

I replied to him that in fact I had nothing but to praise him since my arrival in Berlin, and that it was the same with the people with whom business had brought me into contact, that I did not only feel one regret, that of seeing him too rarely, and that I was as ready as him to deny the allegations in the newspapers. "These," I added, "are a plague and tend to create for us, in one country as in the other, embarrassments of which we must not and which neither you nor I want to accept. responsibility." Complete adherence on his part to this language.

I am happy to think that this big affair is so advanced that we can consider it almost finished (in this I was venturing a little). No doubt, from all points of view, it would be better if the Germans decided to leave Belfort at the same time as the rest of the territory; but, if the terms of the new and final arrangement are as precise as Mr. de Bismarck promised me, I hope that we will have the wisdom, in France, not to become

impatient with the limited extension of the stay of German troops in this little corner of our country.

The revised project of the German government left for Paris, sent to Count Arnim. Here is the dispatch in which I announced it to the ministry, after a visit I had made to the Chancellor.

Berlin, 9 o'clock in the evening, March 4, 1873.

The Chancellor's proposals, approved by the King, were sent yesterday evening by a special courier; they had to pass through Nancy, so that they could be communicated to Mr. de Saint-Valier and General de Manteuffel could make the necessary preparations for the departure of the troops at the beginning of July. At the same time the Chancellor informed Count Arnim by telegraph. He reportedly replied that he requested absolute secrecy in the interest of the negotiations. The Chancellor told me - if I understood him correctly - that he had replied to Count d'Arnim that he did not see the need, that he wanted to lay his cards on the table, adding that these proposals were more advantageous to France than the stipulations of the treaty, and that they would certainly be considered thus by Mr. Thiers. The Chancellor wrote to Mr. d'Arnim that he himself had informed me of these proposals two days ago."

The examination was therefore going to be carried out contradictorily by the Count of Arnim and by our government. I must have been involved in it a lot more than I expected.

On March 7 I wrote to Mr. Thiers:

This letter is dated March 6 in Occupation and liberation of the territory. This date is corrected by the author on the minute, with the mention: Wrongly dated 6th

“Just two words to tell you that Bleichröder came to my house just now, obviously from Prince Bismarck. The purpose of his visit was — unless I am very mistaken — to reassure me about the clause in the proposals relating to Belfort. He told me again and again, in any case, that the extension of the occupation of Belfort and its canton was a necessary concession made to the King and the military party, but that he could swear to me that there would be no had in this fact no ulterior motive and not the slightest desire for indefinite preservation.

I replied to him — as I had done to Prince Bismarck, without too much emphasis — that you and I were perfectly convinced of the loyalty of the King and the Chancellor, that the slightest doubt in this regard was a very insult. removed from our thoughts; but that if I had expressed some regret on the occasion of this clause, it was out of fear of false interpretations by public opinion, which is quite quick to become alarmed in France when it comes to Belfort. “I would have preferred,” I added, “a total evacuation, because my constant concern being the appeasement of the divisions and susceptibilities which still exist between our two countries, a similar resolution on the part of the cabinet of Berlin would have produced the best effect in France and contributed to achieving sooner the goal that we so desire and which we will eventually arrive at, I am confident. I will not insist, moreover, because I have not received a response so far to the communication that I made to Mr. Thiers, on the one hand, and, on the other, because that in short, in my opinion, we can very well agree on the proposed ground.”

M. de Bleichröder reiterated that he had had the same concerns as me, and that he had expressed them to the Chancellor, who understood them perfectly (not to say shared them); but the military party is obstinate, defiant, and, for the

very success of the negotiation, it was necessary to give in on this point. And he told me again, affirmed again, that we had to be perfectly calm, and that no ulterior motive was hidden under the Belfort clause. I told you, in my letter to Mr. de Rémusat of March 2, that I had the same impression after my interview with Prince Bismarck...

On March 9, Mr. Thiers replied to me. He apologized for his serious occupations with the Assembly at the same time as with the Count of Arnim, and for a few days' indisposition, for having left my correspondence unanswered. He considered the differences with the Thirty to be ironed out and counted on a majority of four to five hundred votes for the final vote. He then said to me: "I entered into action with Mr. Count d'Arnim, whom I found this time gentle, friendly, even cordial, and whose language is only a repetition of the content of your letters. M. de Manteuffel said the same things to Nancy. The two months added to the occupation, as far as Belfort is concerned, are an indispensable sacrifice made to the King and the military party, and containing no ulterior motive. M. d'Arnim gave me his word of honor; Mr. de Manteuffel, speaking, acting on his side, isolated in relation to Mr. d'Arnim, also gave me his word of honor, and to the latter I add complete faith... Besides that, I believe honesty, there is a reason here which persuades me: we want peace (this can be recognized by a thousand striking signs), and we would not go from this desire to that of war for a place, whatever it may be. either.

There remains, however, as you rightly said, the effect on the public, an effect that can only be avoided by very clear and precise writing. Here is the one that I made and which I communicate to you so that you request its maintenance, as much as possible, for the following reasons:

1° It is clear and of a positive nature which excludes doubt;

2° It presents evacuation as necessarily successive, and Belfort must therefore become the end of the total operation;

3° It affirms the definitive evacuation of Belfort, made simultaneous with the last payment, in a manner likely to reassure the public, which is essential for us.

Without this wording, the effect of the exception with which Belfort is subject would be most worrying.

The first three articles in this editorial were as follows:

Art. 1. — The sum of three billion five hundred million having been paid out of the five billion stipulated, and that of fifteen hundred million only remaining to be paid, this balance will be paid to the German Treasury in six payments executed according to the forms prescribed and practiced until now, in the proportions and at the times mentioned below: April 5, 250 million, notice of which has already been given to the Prussian authorities; Next May 5, 200 million; June 5, 300 million; July 5, 250 million; August 5, 250 million; September 5, 250 million. Total, 1,500 million.

Art. 2. — His Majesty the King of Prussia, Emperor of Germany, undertakes to give his troops the necessary orders so that the four departments of Ardennes, Vosges, Meuse and Meurthe-et-Moselle are completely evacuated from July 1 to July 5.

Art. 3. — The district and the Place de Belfort must be evacuated on September 5, it being understood that the final balance of 250 million, as well as the interest due, must be paid. the evacuation of the Place de Belfort, will take place simultaneously.

It might be said that such a precise indication of the day of the evacuation can be very embarrassing. I answer that with people of good faith it is always easy to get along; that we were very careless about fixed dates, knowing that the movements of armies are not precise like those of individuals; I finally answer that the payments take a little time, that we see them being prepared very clearly, and that it is very easy, when we see the money ready on the table (that is to say in the fund of the most famous European bankers), to order in advance the departure of troops without committing imprudence.

For the forts of Paris, for example, our troops had already entered there, the Prussian officers, war officers, administration officers, health officers, etc., came and went for equipment and sick people in delay.

I want you to see the King on this occasion without provoking him; he will not fail to give you some personal assurances of his own, which it will always be good to collect and lock up in your memory as an honest man. You will only be pressing to the appropriate extent, and in matters of measure you are master.

There is one point that M. d'Arnim was keen to obtain and which I refused. He wanted the neutralization of the territories to be extended by six months.

Article 5 of Mr. Thiers' project stipulated: It remains agreed, as previously, that the evacuated territories will remain neutralized until September 5, the time of the definitive evacuation, and that, until this time, neither of the two contracting parties will be able to erect other fortification works than those which currently exist.

This is not admissible. Neutralizations of this type are conceived when an army is present, and it does this for its

safety; but the occupying army having left, this reason falls away, and we would seem to accept an interdict, like the one that Napoleon had formerly imposed on Prussia. "Besides, you understand that there will always be a way to get along. My letter will closely follow that of Mr. d'Arnim, and you must let it be known that you are informed of everything and ready to confer. It is even very desirable. I am leaving you, because I am overwhelmed with fatigue... "Yours in heart."

We see, through this letter, the error committed by an eminent academician, friend and historiographer of Mr. Thiers, in a very interesting book that he dedicated to the memory of the former President of the Republic Recounting all the adventures of the last phase of the negotiations relating to the complete liberation of our territory, Mr. de Mazade said: "It was March 13, we had to put an end to it. The real, or rather the only difficulty, was due to Belfort, which Mr. de Bismarck pretended to keep provisionally as a last pledge, and the question was all the more delicate since there was a strong feeling of concern in France, that Germany was suspected of reserving some unforeseen pretext to definitively retain the great place from the east. Mr. Thiers understood that if Belfort remained, even for a few more months, in the hands of the Germans, French opinion would be deeply moved, that this very emotion would perhaps become an embarrassment, and he showed himself absolutely determined not to sign anything if we did not give him what he asked for, the simultaneous release of Belfort and the other departments. Entrenched on this last and only point of defense, he had expressly recommended to Mr. de Gontaut-Biron not to give in. (Ch. De Mazade, Monsieur Thiers, p. 389.) This is an inaccurate

assertion. Despite the patriotic sorrow that he felt like all of us, Mr. Thiers had given in on the question of the simultaneity of the liberation of Belfort and the other departments. The letter that I have just reported is proof without reply. The proof is still found in the draft treaty that Mr. Thiers sent me, and which contained these clauses: The four departments of Ardennes, Vosges, Meuse, Meurthe-et-Moselle will be completely evacuated from the 1st to July 5; the district and Place de Belfort must be evacuated on September 5 (art. 2 and 3). Finally, two days later, Mr. Thiers received communication of the very text of Prince Bismarck's project, a project similar to his own, communicated by General de Manteuffel to the Count of Saint-Vallier, and he warned me, by a dispatch dated 11 March, that it was quite ready to accept it, except for two points, of secondary importance, to be modified, declaring to me that he regarded the agreement as easy on these bases. However, this project meant that Belfort would be evacuated two months after the other departments. Mr. Thiers had therefore resigned himself to signing a treaty which did not formulate the total liberation of the territory at once, and even postponed it more than his proposals carried, when the interview of the 11th took place (and not of the 13th, as Mr. de Mazade indicated by mistake), in which Prince Bismarck, with whom I had often discussed the unfortunate, serious effect that the prolongation of the occupation of Belfort would produce in France, made me the opening of the substitution of Verdun at Belfort, as the last post of the German occupation. Never, must I by add, never did Mr. Thiers, in his numerous letters, speak to me of the substitution of any place in Belfort. Finally, it was only

on the evening of the 14th, the very day before the signing of the treaty, that Mr. Thiers recommended me not to give in on the point of replacing Verdun with Belfort. I will explain the reason for this recommendation later, which was based on a misunderstanding. It is, moreover, in a letter from Mr. Thiers dated March 18, which I will reproduce later, that Mr. de Mazade drew exclusively his information. (G.-B.)

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As he closed his letter, the President received a long telegram from me, dated the 9th, at five o'clock in the morning, that is to say written almost at the same time as he wrote to me. My communication was important: it reported on an interview that I had had the day before, on the evening of the 8th, with the Chancellor, very annoyed by the silence of Count JD Arnim, and this interview, provoked by the prince of Bismarck, seemed to prelude the recall of the negotiations to Berlin. There was, moreover, in the last letter from M. Thiers, a word which was like a forecast: "You must make it known that you are informed of everything, and ready to confer," he wrote to me. Mr. Thiers responded immediately to my dispatch with a long postscript adding to his letter and by a telegram.

Here is what I sent to the government: it was at the request of the Chancellor, upset and concerned at having no response to his proposals, sent to Count Arnim eight days previously, that I had come to see him. Distrustful of what he called the subtleties of M. of Arnim, who, he telegraphed this very morning, could not yet have conferred with either Mr. Thiers or Mr. de Rémusat, his language with me was reflected, at the beginning, in his bad humor. He considered that no

serious objections could be presented regarding Belfort and that his conditions offered enough advantages to be accepted without long reflections; because they were identical to the proposals of Mr. Thiers, except at the Belfort point. That was pretty much right; but this exception relating to Belfort had a seriousness which had the air, just the air, I believe, of escaping the Chancellor, and on which I was decided to insist a lot, since he gave me the occasion.

Prince Bismarck read to me his draft treaty. When sending it to the Count of Arnim, he had written to him in clear terms that it was *take it or leave it*, which was surely a misunderstanding. It is, moreover, from a letter from Mr. Thiers dated March 18, and which I will reproduce later, that Mr. de Mazade drew his information exclusively, because he had had great difficulty in obtaining the acquiescence of the King, who was, he said, neither financier nor diplomat, but simply a soldier. He sought to highlight the disadvantages for France of refusing its conditions: extension of occupation, large and numerous barracks to be built to shelter the German troops, in the last two departments, considerable expenses consequently, at our expense, and resulting moreover from the execution of the agreement of June 29; finally, he asked me what I knew and about the resolutions of my government and the delays of which he complained. The explanation of this last point was, in my opinion, in an indisposition of Mr. Thiers, and as for the other, here is what I replied to him:

By proposing total evacuation after July 1, when the payment of the fifth billion would be started, very advanced even, by means of six hundred million drafts acquired by the French Treasury, Mr. the President of the Republic did not suppose the restrictive clause of Belfort it would certainly produce an unfortunate impression in France; I had not hidden it from him when he first gave me the news. "I hope that the

Emperor," I added, "will be able to understand our situation, because he must be enlightened today by the accuracy. and the regularity of our payments, by the sustained and successful effort The Emperor has in us a loyal debtor. His Majesty will want to make our task easier. Allow me to remind you of the Emperor's words at Schlangenbad, on the reduction of the occupation force in the last two departments. You must also not forget that you have undertaken to negotiate with us on the financial guarantees of the fifth billion. — That's true, replied the prince, but there is no question of financial guarantees in Mr. Thiers' proposals. — For a good reason, I continued; is that he already has the largest part of the fifth billion in his portfolio, and, for the remainder, the bankers of Europe would offer us their signature, which is worth cash."

To this the Chancellor responded with arguments such as these: serious events could arise in France, the division of parties, the death of Mr. Thiers finally, all things capable of greatly depreciating portfolio values; consequently, imprudence on the part of Germany in relinquishing its territorial pledge before full payment; then wouldn't the departure of German troops be the signal for revolutionary agitations? Reasonable forecast since Mr. Dufaure himself had indicated it to the National Assembly.

Mr. Dufaure, in improvisation, had let slip these unfortunate expressions which in no way reflected his thoughts: he had spoken of "the explosions which would follow, in our country, the exit of the foreigner from our territory". In the sitting of 10 March, Mr. Dufaure satisfactorily restored the exact meaning of his thought; this was necessary, because of the unfortunate interpretations given to his words abroad. (G-.B.)

"Gambetta, moreover, is getting restless," he said; "it is a mediocrity, I believe, but an energetic mediocrity, and, in the government of peoples, that is what is most dangerous."

I replied to all these arguments. The death of Mr. Thiers would be a serious event, but one which would not be likely to diminish the value of good drafts drawn on the best houses in Europe. It is true that I encountered among many Germans the opinion that the departure of their troops would be the signal for an unleashing of the parties, but I believed it to be nothing less than well-founded. The progress of the order was visible. Himself, the Chancellor, had recognized the truth of the picture that Mr. Thiers had drawn, and nothing attested to this better than the resumption of credit, the ease with which our payments were made, without a financial crisis.

Gambetta's chances and their importance, which were visibly tending to diminish, since the agreement between Mr. Thiers and the right of the Assembly, were exaggerated here. The conservative spirit had regained enough strength to no longer tolerate dictatorships. "Finally," I added, "when you withdraw your troops on July 1, a large part of the fifth billion will be paid, and certainly; the rest will not need, to be guaranteed, the occupation of Belfort. "Well," continued Prince Bismarck, smiling, "we will then be in time to see each other again."

We parted with these words, good to remember. I ended my telegram with these words: "I believe the Chancellor is in a hurry to finish it. negotiation before the opening of Parliament, which takes place on the 12th. I think it will be difficult to obtain better conditions from the Emperor, who accepted these more quickly than I would have thought. later, with the help of maintaining order and the continuation of regular payments, we are given a glimpse of the possibility of

new *softening*. The last words of Prince Bismarck allow me to entertain hope..."

There was more than one reflection to be made on this interview. It was only too visible that there was no confidence abroad in the appeasement at home. I was struck by this during the entire course of my conversation with the Chancellor, and I received this impression from many other sides. Bismarck believed our army was Bonapartist or radical, the towns of the South were revolutionary or very agitated. On this last point, he was not entirely wrong. At one point during the interview, he reproached me for the way we French negotiated, putting ourselves exclusively in our point of view, without concern for others. We should have known that he, Bismarck, had always used his influence to dismiss difficulties and to ask only what we could grant. I told him that I recognized him and that there was justice to be done to him and that we did not refuse him, it was because he had always been more tractable than anyone.

I had often hesitated to tell Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat the feelings that I perceived in the government men in Berlin; I was afraid of being suspected of partiality; and yet, as I saw it today, if I had one reproach to make, it was for not having said it enough. The truth was — I said it — that above all we feared the revolution, an agreement between the government and the left, that we distrusted the republic. I have already noticed it elsewhere; we felt these feelings, then in Berlin, and we did not hide it, because the compensation was not paid in full. Later, we will change language and policy.

First of all, here is the telegraphic response sent to me the President upon receipt of my letter, then the postscript added to his letter of March 9:

You should not be surprised by the delays in our response. I only saw Count d'Arnim on March 5. I was, this

very day, indisposed in a painful way without being serious, and Count d'Arnim has, since yesterday, a draft more or less in line with the proposals he brought me. a letter this evening which brings you this project and my observations We can therefore, by means of the telegraph, be in agreement soon, and be sure that nothing will be neglected to achieve the speediest end possible."

All yours.

The postscript to the letter of the 9th was as follows:

"I have received your encrypted dispatch the 9th this morning, and I am reopening this envelope to add a few observations. I believe, like you, that there is little hope of changing them in Belfort; but we must make them give assurances such that no scoundrel (and we are not dealing with people who would like to dishonor themselves) could fail to do so.

As for the fear of trouble after the departure of the Prussians, it is pure chimera of frightened conservatives. Mr. Dufaure's words have escaped his ignorance of political affairs, and he believes nothing of what is being lent to him. There are, in Paris, well-known old women who write in Berlin indignities of which they do not know the scope, and which one has the weakness to believe. Be convinced (and you know that I have always told you things as they were) that Mr. Gambetta is no more likely than Mr. Ledru-Rollin, to whom no one thinks any more: there is no chance at this moment that I will be replaced by him, even if I die, which I am not; that in any case, the so-called reds no longer want to use their rifles that have been taken away from them and that they like to use their voter's card better, and that by this very means they would not triumph. They will have a more or less strong minority, and it is the legitimists who will make this minority a

little stronger, if it becomes so. The tranquility of the country is and will remain profound; it would have been served a great deal from a single stroke, and if we wanted it, we could dispose things, hastening the payments a little, and by delaying the evacuation a little, so as to finish everything all at once. It is possible, by using the Bank. If we wanted to accept our tickets that are au pair with gold, for a very moderate sum, everything could be done in one go, on August 1st. We have the telegraph, and we can use it. For me, I'd rather delay the evacuation by a month, hasten the full payment by a month, and finish it all together. It would be much better for the opinion. Approach M. de Bismarck on this; even insist.

All reviewed, the best would be to postpone by one month the total evacuation, provided you get it in one go. On this condition, I would pay the whole at 1st of August. In reality, the present treaty would allow us to do so; but the thing agreed, and subject to the acceptance of a sum of notes of the Bank of France, would be better made and would have a better air for everything. In any case, my drafting project remains as a sure resource, except for a few words more or less.

The same day, M. de Rémusat wrote to me. His letter reflected the same impressions as that of M. Thiers. It was M. d'Arnim, he told me, who had informed them that women had written letters in Berlin that were shown to the King. "You have said and you will not tire of repeating," M. de Rémusat recommended to me, "all that must be said to dispel bad impressions. Sincerely, I am much more reassured about the future. Never has M. d'Arnim been in a better mood than for the last eight days. He seems to set a high value and a sort of point of honor in concluding the definitive agreement promptly. Thank you for everything interesting and curious that you tell us.

The negotiations were in a hurry; they were being treated, one might say, in Paris and Berlin simultaneously; which was, one would agree, a rather singular way of treating. Officially, the negotiation was taking place in Paris between Messrs. Thiers and de Rémusat, on the one hand, Count d'Arnim, on the other, and what is more, between the President and General de Manteuffel in Nancy; unofficially and in fact, it was drawn to Berlin by the Chancellor who was ultimately the true and sole arbiter, so that it was being done there between him and me. Also, as a result of this two-sided situation - one could say three-sided - M. Thiers considered it necessary to keep me informed of everything, and we were, the French government and I, in constant communication.

On the morning of the 11th, Prince Bismarck wrote to me that he wished to speak with me; but his day was so full that it was impossible for him to come to the embassy, nor to wait for me at the ministry; he gave me an appointment at the Chamber of Lords, where very important matters had been discussed for several days, such as the modification of certain constitutional laws, the relations between the Church and the State, etc. This conference was to have a very important result; we will see this presently. I arrived at three o'clock at the Chamber; I found the Chancellor overexcited, nervous, tired from twenty-four hours without sleep, and dissatisfied with the vague, incomplete dispatches from Count Arnim, finding that things were not going well in Paris, and consequently quite disposed to make them progress between him and me, as he made me very clear at the end of my visit. But he began by complaining, not without some bitterness, of the opinion that people had of the German government in France.

Many people of very good faith, he said, would suspect us of ulterior motives concerning the treaty signed between us

and believe in our intention not to execute it. But if that were the case, we would be banned from Europe! No power would want to deal with us anymore. Look! I saw at a certain time - he did not designate it otherwise - the King of the Belgians very preoccupied at the time by the rumors of the annexation of his country; he feared arrangements between Prussia and France and he came to ask me to sign a treaty by virtue of which Prussia would forbid itself any project of this kind. I made him understand that the combination he apprehended was impossible, and that the treaty he asked me for was no less so; but I gave him my word of honor that Prussia would never think of consulting with France on the annexation of Belgium. That was enough for him and he left satisfied. I am doing the same today. You must not doubt for a single instant that we will execute the treaty, the whole treaty. If it were not our doing, added the prince with a smile, I undertake to go and give myself up as a prisoner in Paris. There is talk of Belfort. It even seems that they say among you that the military party does not forgive me for having returned this stronghold to you. It is a mistake. Do you want to regain possession of Belfort a little more quickly? Is it the occupation of this place that torments you? Leave us another equivalent pledge until full payment, Toul, Verdun, for example; then we will evacuate Belfort at the same time as the four departments. All we want during the occupation and until the end is a good strategic position that will give us a solid base of defense in the event of an attack by you." It is not difficult to guess the emotion and satisfaction that I felt on hearing these words from the Chancellor; the substitution of Toul or Verdun for Belfort was proposed by himself; he had finally understood that, without compromising the interests of his country, he could give the susceptibilities of ours the satisfaction that we desired and that I had asked of him in almost all our conversations. However, I

concealed my joy, while taking note of this opening, and we continued the examination of all parts of the question which occupied us, that of the last point of the occupation not resolving it entirely.

We reviewed the different combinations of payment and evacuation. I began by explaining the advantages presented by the simultaneity of these two operations, total payment and complete evacuation: this combination would immediately put an end to all the rumors which were agitating, rightly or wrongly, - wrongly in my opinion, - public opinion and representing Germany as desirous of prolonging the occupation beyond the term fixed by the treaties. Its success depended, moreover, on the consent of Germany to receive notes from the Bank of France - as sure as gold - for a small part of the fifth billion. This combination pleased the Chancellor enough, but he needed the assent of Mr. Delbrück, which he urged me to see on my side, and above all with the consent of the Emperor.

In the absence of this combination, I approached that which was implied by the proposals of the Chancellor, accepted in principle by M. Thiers, that is to say the successive evacuation.

It may be thought that I would have done better to keep silent on this one, since the combination of payment and evacuation in one go seemed to suit the Chancellor; but I foresaw that this proposal would have to undergo more than one examination, that it would not be appreciated in high places, that it would cause new delays and would finally be rejected, and I feared losing the opportunity to obtain from Prince Bismarck modifications to his project. If we had to stick to the successive evacuation, it was a lot to have obtained Verdun or Toul instead of Belfort, but it was still extremely important to settle everything concerning the rest of the

question. I represented to Prince Bismarck the necessity, in order to ward off the bad effect that the prolonged occupation of a last point of its territory would produce in France, of agreeing on the wording of the agreement.

"Mr. Thiers," I told him, "is very keen that the simplest minds or those most prejudiced against Germany should not give our convention any other interpretation than this: absolute simultaneity between the successive payments and the evacuations, exact correlation between the two types of operations, such that September 5 would be both the date of the last payment and the departure of your last troops."

I read Mr. Thiers' report, which immediately raised the Chancellor's objections, particularly with regard to the evacuation periods which were infinitely too short, according to him.

It was on this last point that the differences between the project of M. Thiers and that of the Prince of Bismarck had previously proposed. The Chancellor requested a one-month delay for the complete evacuation of the four departments, after the payment of the sum due in July. Mr. Thiers requested, on the contrary, that this evacuation take place and be completed between July 1 and 5.

He was visibly annoyed at having to examine new combinations, the adoption of which depended not only on him, but on M. Delbrück and the Emperor, and repeating the same reproach as three days before: "You do not know how to understand sufficiently in France the situation of those with whom you are dealing," he said to me; "that is what is prolonging the negotiations unnecessarily." The allusion that these words made to the previous negotiations in Brussels and Frankfurt was obvious. But he added that he did not intend to

speak of the current negotiations, nor of those which had preceded the convention of June 29. Then he entered rather briskly into a subject which he had always exploited with a certain complacency, the difficulty of convincing the Emperor.

I remember what M. Thiers told me about his relations with King Louis-Philippe who, after having yielded to his opinion, said to him in a rather familiar tone: "Here is a terrible head! When something has entered it, it is not easy to get it out." It is the opposite situation between my sovereign and me. I have the greatest difficulty in reversing his biases; each time, it is a full-fledged siege. I begin by securing allies by persuading Roon and Delbrück; I open the trench; I push parallels until the moment of mounting the assault. Do you want me to tell you a detail of what happened in connection with the current negotiation? I said to the Emperor: "Your Majesty has all the guarantees imaginable; therefore "if She wishes to evacuate at such a time, She can do so." — The Emperor corrected me with humor: "I know very well that I can do it if I wish. I can even withdraw all my troops from France at once. The treaty does not block me to do so. And yet, there is no need to think about it."

Finally, the fears that the Chancellor had expressed to me in our previous conversation about the state of France, he assured me that the Emperor felt more keenly than anyone.

And if M. Thiers were to die, thought the Emperor, — and may God keep him! for, sincerely, we wish him long life — then, M. Gambetta would come to power, and a fortnight later we would have the war of revenge.

"That is at least the opinion of my sovereign," added the Chancellor; and I do not mean for that reason that it is mine. — The Emperor, I replied with a certain warmth, is in a profound error (and I insisted forcefully on the reasons for trusting in us that I had already given to the Chancellor);

Gambetta would come to power that he would not make war, be certain of it. He could not make it. Order is being reborn among us, work has begun again everywhere, and our populations have regained a taste for peaceful labor which gives them comfort and, for many, wealth.

While I was speaking, the prince listened to me, his head bowed and in an attitude of profound attention. I understand you, he said to me, when I had stopped, and I am inclined to judge the situation of France as you do; but I have much to do yet to convert the Emperor to this assessment. As for giving you an answer, I will need at least eight days. "Examine," I said then, "the combinations of which I have spoken to you. You know how to make the most political opinion prevail over considerations of a secondary order; I therefore confidently deliver my observations to the sagacity of your mind. "Well!" the prince resumed with good humor, "do you want to substitute Toul or Verdun for Belfort, as the last point of occupation?" This time he gave his proposal a precise form, and, after a moment, he added, fixing my gaze: We are almost in agreement, we could very well sign together and immediately.

This unexpected overture was calculated to charm me, as much as to surprise me; I was content, however, to answer him that I would be very willing, but that for that I would need instructions and powers that I did not have.

A few moments later, I left him to make my report without delay to the government. I remembered a little later what he had said to me, at the beginning of our interview, in the form of an ironic allusion, when speaking to me about maintaining the headquarters of the negotiation in Paris. He had uttered some rather strange words about "stock market games", about "speculations involving German financiers, a purchase of five hundred million in French annuities, in which

they would have liked to make the imperial government participate"; Finally, he had insinuated that, as a result of these speculations, there might be people interested in the negotiation ending in Paris. "I leave it to you," I wrote to M. Thiers, giving him, that same evening, the details of this very important interview, "to unravel the meaning of these insinuations and allusions, unintelligible to me, which Prince Bismarck, moreover, made in an ironic form and treating these rumors as unfounded."

A detail to be noted, and which I pointed out to M. Thiers: Neither in this interview, nor in the previous one, had anything been said about our armaments and our alleged preparations for revenge. The Chancellor's tone had been almost generally friendly, and he was to be thanked for it, for he was overburdened with work at the moment, irritated by the opposition he encountered from the Tories in the House of Lords, and more absorbed than ever in the work of government which he had reserved for himself.

I had immediately sent a telegram to Mr. Thiers. He sent me another the next day, worded as follows:

Versailles, March 12, 1873.

I received your dispatch of yesterday evening, eight o'clock. I am ready to sign on the following conditions:

Verdun substituted for Belfort.

Four weeks for the evacuation of the four departments.

Ten days for the evacuation of Verdun, the substitution to which we must adhere having been definitively accepted.

Last evacuation deadline: September 1st.

On reflection, I prefer to extend by a month and act more surely.

These conditions accepted, we can agree in two hours on the drafting, which you would complete at Bern, taking either my text or the one that was sent to Nancy.

"All yours from the bottom of my heart. Express to M. de Bismarck my high esteem for his rare good sense."

From M. Thiers' response on the subject of the substitution of Verdun for Belfort, things moved forward quickly, which does not mean without difficulties, as we shall see. The day of the 12th was very good. The Emperor, in the Speech from the Throne, made use of language so satisfactory that one could conclude from it the imminent success of the negotiation in the direction of our desires; then, I had an interview with the Chancellor in which we agreed on almost all points; he nevertheless reserved the approval of the Emperor and that of Marshal Moltke, and it was there that a stumbling block was encountered which threatened to cause everything to fail. Here is the passage from the Speech from the Throne which concerned France: "... A few days after the close of the last session, a convention was concluded with France, which fixes the deadlines for the payment of the last part of the war indemnity, as well as those for the evacuation of the territories still occupied by our troops. The communications which will be made to you, on the subject of this convention and its execution, will show you that France has greatly anticipated the terms agreed for its payments, and that consequently the time has come to decide definitively on the reserved questions.

The hope which I expressed here, last year, to see the internal situation of France develop in the direction of appeasement and economic progress, has not been disappointed. I base on this the hope that the moment is not very far away when the complete settlement of financial

questions with the French government will allow the complete evacuation of French territory to be carried out, sooner than had been planned...

On leaving the opening session of the Reichstag, I went to see the Chancellor. Our conversation was short, but decisive. I informed Prince Bismarck of Mr. Thiers' response and of his assent to the substitution of Verdun for Belfort. "We ask," I added, "that the evacuation of the district of Belfort and the four departments, less Verdun, be ordered by the Emperor for July 1st, that of Verdun for September 1st. Our wish would be that the first should last only fifteen days,

This desire was formulated in a telegram sent the day before by M. de Rémusat to M. de Gontaut. We have just seen that M. Thiers did not maintain it in his telegram of March 12.

three weeks at the most; but we will not dwell on the subject. If you formally declare to us that these are insufficient delays, we will give in and agree to the four weeks you are asking for the first and ten days for that of Verdun."

The prince assured me and proved by going into all sorts of technical details, that the period of four weeks would be barely sufficient to load and transport all the equipment, the transport of war munitions for example requiring for him alone from eight hundred to a thousand wagons. Personally, he maintained the offer to substitute Verdun for Belfort; "but I must speak about it," he said, "to M. de Moltke whom I will probably find favorable to this substitution, then see the Emperor, and I hope not to meet with opposition from that side"; and he wrote in my presence a request for an audience with the Emperor, who would grant it to him, he hoped, despite a family meeting convened in honor of the return of the

Imperial Prince from Wiesbaden. He entrusted me with the text of the German proposals, asking me to return it to him, after two hours, after having noted down opposite the observations that I would have to make, the modifications that I would propose. "We have advanced things sufficiently in our discussions," he told me, "that a few indications to this effect should be sufficient for me, and since M. Thiers is of the opinion that we can agree on this text, it will not take us much time to decide on the final wording together. If I am pressing you so much, it is because I must see the Emperor this very evening and tomorrow, we will be ready to agree." "Agreed," I replied, "because M. Thiers invites me to combine this wording with you."

We further agreed that payments would be made on the 5th of each month, until September 5, that the evacuation of the departments would begin on July 5 at the latest, and that of Verdun on September 5.

Telegraphing the summary of our discussion to M. Thiers, I asked him what I should do the next day if the agreement was complete. I took care not to forget the Speech from the Throne that I had heard during the day; I had frankly expressed to the Chancellor the satisfaction that certain words had caused me. "I believe, in fact," he had replied, "that they accurately reflect the situation." — "Thus," I wrote to M. Thiers, "the observations that we exchanged in our last conversations have borne fruit, for there is no doubt that the expressions of the Speech from the Throne go beyond the original thought of the Emperor as reported to me by Prince Bismarck and as reported to me also from several sides."

To the account of all that has just been read, I added, in my letter to M. Thiers, other details and some reflections: "I have had the opportunity to see for myself the Herculean work that the Chancellor is undertaking to bear the weight of all the

responsibilities that he has accepted. To give you just two examples, he spoke yesterday in the House of Lords a few moments after our interview, and I saw on his table the voluminous file of our negotiation, with a quantity of dispatches written in his hand. In my opinion, the reasons for his eagerness to deal with us are: the difficulties he must expect in Prussian religious affairs — we were then in the middle of the Kulturkampf — which are taking an increasingly serious turn, since the proceedings have begun against the Archbishop of Posen;

Mgr Ledochowski. His resistance to the Kulturkampf earned him heavy fines, two years' imprisonment and dismissal. The Pope named him cardinal on March 15, 1875. Released in February 1876, he went to settle in Rome and renounced the see of Posen in January 1886.

then and above all, the importance of the questions to be dealt with before the German parliament, whose session must be extremely busy.

I could have added: the desire — and the great importance he attached to it — to have collected the war indemnity and to be completely free, henceforth, in his policy towards France, free from the considerations that he had rightly judged useful to maintain, in his relations with her and even with the rest of Europe, so as not to risk compromising Germany's claim on us.

Scarcely had I returned to the embassy than I had the German text of the treaty that the Chancellor had just given me translated and I wrote my observations in the margin, the main ones relating to the substitution of Verdun for Belfort; I telegraphed at the same time to M. Thiers to obtain clarifications on two or three points. I had not been back an

hour and a half, and already Prince Bismarck was sending me an attaché to the ministry to urge me to return the treaty and my observations to him. I hastened and had everything brought to him by one of my secretaries.

At the same time, I received a telegram from Mr. Thiers which, after some indications on secondary points, ended thus:

"Your powers were sent this night, and without waiting for them, as soon as you agree, I authorize you to sign. The commitment made will then be given the authentic form. "All yours with all my heart."

I replied to the President:

"I receive your telegram. I thank you for it.

I await a new meeting with Mr. Bismarck.

We will agree promptly on the main points, and the secondary points, I hope, will not raise great difficulties. I feel a deep gratitude for the mission that you are kind enough to give me. It will be the greatest honor of my life to put my name at the bottom of a treaty which will complete the liberation of France. It is also a rare good fortune for me to have received, in the accomplishment of this task, directions such as yours and those of Mr. de Rémusat.

That same day, Mr. de Rémusat wrote me a letter which related to the various telegrams and reports that I had previously sent. The "skepticism" of Mr. de Rémusat has been spoken of quite often; I like to quote this letter from him, not, certainly, because of the new testimonies it contains of excessive benevolence towards me, however precious they may be to me, but to respond to the reproach addressed to him; for skepticism hardly goes with the emotion and patriotism which overflow from this letter.

Paris, March 12, 1873.

You have brought us a day of emotion; but we thank you for it, my dear ambassador, because, up to now at least, your news has brought us nothing but happiness. God grant that this happiness may be sustained and that no incident may prevent the accomplishment of the hopes given to us by your penultimate telegram. The substitution of Verdun for Belfort is a piece of good fortune that we would not have dared to imagine, and I have infinite gratitude, shall I say it? a true gratitude to Prince Bismarck for having had this blessed idea. May he carry it through to the end and have it accepted around him! Until you write to us: *Everything is signed*, I will not be able to have complete security...

Already, in the middle of the day, we were agreeably surprised by the King's speech. We did not expect that he would speak of us, that he would speak of us with this breadth, with this tone of benevolence and confidence. This speech will have a considerable effect tomorrow morning. I believe that you will do well to make the King, in some way, feel the impression that this language has produced on us. I trust you to express this kind of thanks without costing our dignity.

As for Mr. Bismarck, it would not be appropriate to speak to him of sentiment. But I cannot help saying that great minds always have a share of justice and impartiality which is found in the occasion. It is good to deal with a true statesman.

You may find this letter strange. I will admit to you that I am not entirely calm. I am writing to you with a mixture of joy and anxiety, and I will add, in confidence, that the President is hardly calmer than I am.

This letter will reach you with your full powers. May you use them without delay, the very day you receive them! I like to think that the right to put your name to this liberating convention has fallen to you and is like the reward for the important services that you have rendered to the State, in the

course of your difficult mission. For I hope that M. de Bismarck will not have the idea of postponing the closing of the negotiation to Paris, and that he will prefer to finish with you immediately. The blow will be hard for M. d'Arnim; but he has only himself to blame; at least we are not responsible for it. Very sincerely, we believed that we had to deal only with him, and it is on the direct provocation of M. de Manteuffel, himself pressed by M. de Bismarck, that we kept the headquarters informed,

The headquarters of General de Manteuffel in Nancy. It is known that Prince Bismarck, dissatisfied with Count Arnim and having no confidence in him, often had recourse, in this important negotiation, to General Manteuffel, as an intermediary between M. Thiers and him.

in part, of a negotiation that suddenly a will Held in Berlin took out of the hands of the ambassador and even those of the general to seize it by seizing it herself. After all, we cannot be reproached for having had as much confidence in our ambassador as in ourselves.

I end by asking God to remove from us unforeseen whims, and by renewing to you, Sir, more cordially than ever, the expression of the feelings that you know you inspire in me.

On the evening of March 13, new interview with the Chancellor; but the horizon is no longer as clear as the two previous days; the clouds are arriving: these are the difficulties that I announced above, it is an attempt renewed several times to return to the substitution of Verdun for Belfort. I rejected the attack; but I could not refuse the Chancellor, on his formal request, to refer the matter to M. Thiers. This is perhaps what gave me an appearance of hesitation that enemies, perhaps, I

do not know which ones, tried to exploit against me with the President. We will see this shortly.

On leaving Prince Bismarck's, at half past eleven in the evening, I reported to Mr. Thiers, by telegraph, of our conversation:

March 13, 11:30 p.m.

This document is dated by mistake, in Occupation et Libération du territoire, March 14, 12 p.m., 3 p.m.

For Mr. Thiers.

The question of Verdun is a difficulty, the military authority alleging that, given the distance from Metz, it needs a stage on one of the roads. The Chancellor proposed that I sign, immediately, if I would stick to Belfort. If, on the contrary, we preferred the substitution of Verdun, we would have to, he said, come to an agreement with the military authority to determine this stage, and, because of the time that the negotiations would require, we could probably not sign before five or six days. The stage, moreover, would only include a post of a few men. He does not want to see the Emperor again, whose consent is always difficult to obtain, before having settled this question of stage.

Prince Bismarck urged me not to make difficulties for Belfort, saying that until yesterday M. Thiers spoke only of Belfort and not of Verdun. - He had indeed on his table a telegram from General de Manteuffel announcing M. Thiers' adhesion to the Berlin project, which was prior to the proposal made by the Chancellor to substitute Verdun for Belfort and designated this second place as the last point of the German occupation. — "The Chancellor has obviously seized upon the acceptance of the conditions that M. de Rémusat had made known to M. de Saint-Valier on the 11th, since you were not

seized of the offer of Verdun. He accused me, laughing, of being more royalist than the king.

I communicated to him your latest instructions, and I reminded him of the reason why we preferred Verdun and the impressions of public opinion. It was agreed that I would refer them to you immediately, and that I would let him know your response tomorrow morning. If it were Belfort, we would sign immediately. The thing remained thus agreed between us.

"The prince insisted on the advantage that there would be in signing here. On the question of the evacuation times, after each of the payments, no serious difficulties..."

The attack of the tempter was lively. I pushed it back; but to put an end to his insistence, I agreed to refer the matter to M. Thiers, although I could already guess his answer. The Chancellor had used all sorts of arguments to make me give in.

Here, he told me among other things, is a confidence that I want to make to you. Our officers and non-commissioned officers are poorly paid; well, as long as they are in France, they receive double pay, that is to say, they accumulate with their ordinary pay a supplement taken from the indemnity that France pays to the occupying troops. They are doing so well that they will drag out the arrangement that will have to be made, if you absolutely insist on substituting Verdun for Belfort, where the garrison is more considerable than in the other place. They have not admitted this reason to me, but I have guessed it. "I can explain," I replied, "the point of view of the military; but, for you and for me, this is a secondary consideration."

"Not secondary," the prince replied, "because I cannot do otherwise than take great account of the opinion of the military in this whole affair."

It is very likely that the military argument, like that of the slowness of the negotiations in the event that Verdun were substituted for Belfort, was launched by the Chancellor to make me renounce Verdun.

"If you agree to the original arrangement," he told me two or three times, "we will finish it immediately and this evening we will have signed."

As a matter of reason, I would not have taken it upon myself to give in, even if I had been disposed to do so, which was certainly not the case. But it was obvious that my refusals upset Prince Bismarck. He again brought up the slowness of the French negotiators; I exclaimed. "In any case," I said to him, "such a reproach, here, cannot reach either M. Thiers or me;" and he did not deny it. "But," he replied, "I am dissatisfied with the slowness and obscurities of Count Arnim, and that is why I proposed to you to finish the affair with me." I replied that if I had not sought it out, I was very honored to put my signature at the bottom of the treaty, but that I was stopped by a great scruple before which my person disappeared.

I had not yet finished writing my telegram to M. Thiers, when I received from him another one very likely to surprise me.

Versailles, March 13.

I have just received a visit from M. le Comte d'Arnim, with the text that you were discussing and the conditions that I had authorized you to agree to, including the substitution from Verdun to Belfort. Count d'Arnim had orders to sign, and, wishing to take advantage of this provision, I called M. de Rémusat and ordered the preparation of the instrument for tomorrow. Although this incident deprives you of the signature, I reserve for you a testimony that will prove the part that you had in this liberating negotiation.

My telegram had not been sent; I immediately added these words: "I received your telegram on leaving the Chancellor's. I do not understand why Count Arnim says he is authorized to sign tomorrow with the substitution of Verdun. I await your instructions."

The news, in fact, had reason to surprise me, after the declarations of the Chancellor who said he was ready to sign immediately, *on one condition*, that we would concede the occupation of Belfort.

Was Mr. Arnim really authorized to give in on Verdun, at the very moment when Mr. Bismarck was giving me a glimpse of difficulties and delays in the conclusion of our arrangement, if we persisted in demanding this substitution? The supposition of a double-entry action seemed to me difficult to reconcile with what the Chancellor had told me about his instructions to the German ambassador in Paris, and with the appearance of loyalty of his procedures since we had entered into negotiations.

The following day, the 14th, at one o'clock in the afternoon, I received Mr. Thiers' reply to the telegram I had sent after my last interview with the Chancellor. "I absolutely insist on the substitution of Verdun for Belfort, and it has been expressly agreed to by Count Arnim. I am certain, moreover, by a communication that I will make known to you, that he was formally authorized to do so. The difficulty of the stages is not one.

I have agreed to it, and it could be one battalion per stage... I have agreed to the evacuation period. You see that there is no longer any reason to delay, and Count Arnim has agreed to the hour for today." It was very clear, indeed, and Mr. Thiers was right to seize the opportunity. My doubts, however, were not yet cleared up: had Count Arnim received the order to conclude and sign?

I had promised the Chancellor the day before to let him know M. Thiers's answer on the question of Belfort. I also had to tell him the happy but somewhat surprising news that I had received from Versailles. I wondered which was preferable, to go and see him or to write to him? I feared when I saw him that my language or my attitude would not sufficiently conceal the various impressions aroused in me by M. Thiers' telegrams.

Had the Chancellor, in fact, really ordered M. d'Arnim to sign yesterday, when, three days before, he had withdrawn the negotiation from him? Were his words of the day before, tending to make me go back on the substitution of Verdun for Belfort, only a supreme attempt to wrest from me a concession that his ambassador would have ceased to pursue the next day in Paris, if nothing had been concluded in Berlin on the evening of the 13th? Would it be prudent to let him even suspect that I was catching him red-handed in a double game which, after all, existed in my mind only in a state of doubt? I decided to write to him, thinking that it would have been better, on the one hand, to spare his susceptibility and to preserve the possibility of concluding in Berlin with the full powers that the government had sent me, if it were not true that the Chancellor had, for the second time, postponed the negotiation, and, on the other hand, to see him coming. Today, sixteen years after the incident recounted here, I believe that it would have been preferable to go straight to Prince Bismarck without writing to him, and that this procedure would have suited him. I therefore addressed, at three o'clock, to the Chancellor, the following letter:

Friday, March 14, 1873.

My Prince,

Late yesterday evening, I received a telegram from M. Thiers, the meaning of which seemed so unclear to me that I asked him for explanations during the night. I just received his reply: Mr. Thiers informs me that yesterday Mr. d'Arnim, after having agreed with him on all points, made an appointment today for the signing. I will therefore not have to use my full powers which came to me this morning.

"Everything being doubtless finished, and happily finished, at the time I write to you, thanks this time to the activity of Count d'Arnim, it remains for me to tell you that I remain at your disposal if you would like to speak with me, thanking you, for my government, for the good dispositions that you have shown it throughout this negotiation. — Accept, etc."

At the end of his telegram, Mr. Thiers had written to me: "I have just had suppressed, by my order, by virtue of the powers of the state of siege, the journal *l'Assemblée nationale*, which has been applying itself for several days to insulting Prince Bismarck. "I thought I could not neglect to inform the prince, at the end of my letter, of the President's initiative.

The Chancellor's reply was not long in coming. At half past four, he wrote me the following:

Berlin, March 14, 1873.

Viscount,

I have just received your note, but unfortunately it is not possible to conclude the matter in accordance with its contents. Mr. d'Arnim is not authorized to sign a draft without it having been previously approved by His Majesty the Emperor, and even if he had been, I informed him yesterday that I agreed with you and that the act would be signed here. I forbade him, at the same time, to sign anything that could compete with the text that we have before us and which has

the advantage of being known and approved here as in Paris. I therefore believe that nothing will be done at Versailles today, and if something were done, it would only be subject to being ratified or modified after knowing the text. I would be very grateful if you would do me the honor of calling on me, either before five o'clock or after seven o'clock.

Half an hour later, M. Thiers himself confirmed to me the contents of the Chancellor's letter:

"I have received from Count Arnim," he telegraphed me, "the news that Prince Bismarck wants to sign in Berlin. We have no objection to this."

At the same time, he pointed out to me an error to be corrected to prevent the enumeration of the territories to be evacuated from being insufficient and announced to me the sending of the text agreed with Count Arnim, which text moreover did not change in any way the conditions agreed.

How can we explain this misunderstanding between Bismarck and M. Arnim? How had the latter said he was authorized to sign on the 13th, while Prince Bismarck continued the negotiation with me? How did he say he was ready to sign with the clause of the substitution of Verdun for Belfort, at the same time when this question was still debated and not decided between Prince Bismarck and me?

It is possible that the German ambassador, very mortified at seeing the signature of the treaty unexpectedly taken from him, wanted to make up for it by a bold move: if he failed, as he was on bad terms with the Chancellor, busy replacing him, the move would only hasten certain disgrace; but, if he succeeded in deceiving the vigilance of his chief, he would at least have the glory of having affixed his signature to the treaty. But he had not realized that Paris and Bern were in constant correspondence and that his little conspiracy had a good chance of being uncovered. What is equally inexplicable

is the assertion of M. Thiers in his penultimate dispatch: "I am *certain*," he said, "by a communication that I will make known to you, that Count Arnim was formally authorized to consent to the substitution of Belfort."

Mr. Thiers himself admitted to me, since then, that he had been deceived by an intrigue for which he was never able to obtain a serious explanation.

In order not to slow down the account of the negotiation, I have omitted to report a paragraph from one of Mr. Thiers' dispatches, which concerned me and which announced a distinction whose considerations were even more precious to me than the distinction itself. It said: "The Council, on my proposal, has conferred on you the grand cordon of the Legion of Honor to properly consecrate the part you played in the negotiation which freed our territory." I will be allowed to add that not being until then even a knight of the Legion of Honor, the exceptional conditions, if not unique, in which this reward was granted to me gave it a very significant and very precious character.

I saw Mr. de Bismarck in the evening, as he had expressed his desire to me. I brought him a new draft of the main articles of the treaty; thus, I had restored the preamble as Mr. Thiers had written it.

It was on this text that our discussion began. After some preliminary difficulties, Prince Bismarck gave in very willingly on most points, and, after five quarters of an hour of conference, the project was handed over to our secretaries, Mr. Debains and Count Hatzfeldt, to complete the drafting in detail. I returned to the embassy to send the following telegram to Mr. Thiers:

Berlin, March 14, 1873, 10:30 p.m.

Everything is arranged. I have an appointment tomorrow at two o'clock with Prince Bismarck to sign. I asked for this delay in order to have time to receive the modifications you mentioned in your dispatch of the 14th, 1:25 a.m. Please send them to me immediately by telegraph, because the prince is in a great hurry to sign. Prince Bismarck does not quite understand what this enumeration could be, which seems useless to him, according to the text that we have agreed upon.

I also attach great importance to this immediate dispatch, because the Emperor is due to come to a party at my house tomorrow. Will you not send me a telegram specially addressed to him?

We have combined your text and that of Prince Bismarck: Verdun, with a radius of three kilometers around the place, is substituted for Belfort. We have agreed on two stages on the roads from Verdun to Metz with a half-battalion in each. The number of troops that will occupy Verdun will not exceed by more than a thousand men those who are there on the day of signing.

The evacuation of the district of Belfort and the four departments, with the exception of Verdun, will take place within four weeks from July 5; that of Verdun within fifteen days from September 5...

I am deeply touched by the distinction that you are good enough to grant me and which is far superior to my merits and my troubles." I had hardly sent this telegram when I received one from a rather agitated Mr. Thiers. I really do not know what suggestions the President had obeyed in writing it; he himself admitted first and very early, in a telegram, and later, - perhaps with very little good grace, - in a rather tangled letter, in which both the desire to repair his injustice towards me and the will not to recognize any personal wrong were

apparent, that he had been the instrument - I do not mean the plaything - of an inexplicable intrigue; it was the second time in two days. If Mr. Thiers had waited a few hours, reading my telegram of ten thirty would have proven to him the complete uselessness of his own. Besides, I willingly excuse Mr. Thiers, remembering his many concerns in such circumstances. The part of the telegram relating to certain stipulations of the treaty was useless; we had settled everything when it arrived.

*Versailles, Friday, March 14, 1873, 6:25 p.m. (arrived
at 11:35 p.m.).*

In response to your conversation yesterday evening (13), you must have received, by now, the definitive text of the treaty, with authorization to sign it. But I absolutely insist on substituting Verdun for Belfort. We committed ourselves to this yesterday with me; we had it written to me from Nancy; we told you so in Berlin; we cannot go back on such a commitment.

As for the two stages, I agree; as for the number of the garrison, I am willing to increase it, as stated in the text that was sent to you just now.

As for pay, I will comply with all demands. But for Verdun, I persist, and you will persist for yourselves, because by having the negotiation moved from Paris to Berlin, you would have exposed us to losing a point acquired of the highest importance.

I am writing this to you because a dispatch that I received from elsewhere than Paris, authorizes me to think that you have left doubts about the importance that I attach to the substitution of Verdun for Belfort. Hold firm and you will prevail.

A military protocol will be able to regulate all the conditions of the occupation of Verdun. I replied to M. Thiers:

Berlin, March 15, 3 o'clock in the morning.

... You must know by now that we have prevailed for Verdun (1).

See my telegram of the 14th, half past ten in the evening. (G.-B.)

It is a gross falsehood that you have been told, in claiming that I had left doubts about the importance that you attached to the substitution of Verdun for Belfort.

As for having had the seat of the negotiation moved from Paris to Berlin, I had absolutely nothing to do with it. My telegrams and letters should leave you in no doubt on this point. I do not even need to invoke a testimony which I would not fail to provide, that of Prince Bismarck. I am sending to the Department of Foreign Affairs, by mail, the letters which I exchanged with the Chancellor.

To this dispatch and to that of ten thirty in the evening, M. Thiers hastened to reply to me:

Versailles, March 15, 8:35 in the morning.

I received your telegram of the 15th, twenty-five minutes past three in the morning.

All is well, and on the terms of your telegram of yesterday evening, 14th, at twenty-two minutes past eleven.

Signed.

I have always wanted to spare you the honor of signing. The telegrams that I will show you, and for me inexplicable, alone caused my concern.

"But everything is arranged; sign and send us urgently, and by coded telegraph communicate the signature, immediately given, because of the Assembly which must be informed first. Put on your big cordon this evening. I will send you a telegram for the King. "All yours with all my heart."

Were we nevertheless to fail in port? In any case, at the very moment of entering it, that is to say at the moment of affixing our signatures, in the interview fixed for this purpose for the 15th, at two o'clock, new obstacles arose, or, to put it better, the old ones were raised, with the pretension of obtaining from me the renunciation of the concession of Verdun. This was not a good thing to do. When I arrived at the ministry, the attitude of Count Hatzfeldt immediately made me anticipate some difficulties.

In fact, Prince Bismarck had had an audience with the Emperor at noon, and he told me that he had encountered from His Majesty, as well as from the military, the greatest objections to our project of the day before. He therefore took up the idea of maintaining the occupation of Belfort, alleging that if, on the 11th, he had not thoughtlessly made the proposal for Verdun, at a time when M. Thiers had already accepted his project with the clause relating to the preservation of Belfort, everything would have been over by now; and the prince tried, on several occasions, to make me give in. But I stood firm for Verdun and I ended up winning. That was the main thing. Moreover, in order to obtain this result, I had to give in on a point regarded by the German military as very important, but which, in the given circumstances, was secondary. It was a question of the use of the road from Verdun to Metz as a military road; we had agreed, it is true, the Chancellor and I, that we would refer to General de Manteuffel and to M. de Saint-Vallier to combine certain details; but His Majesty did not want to leave any point

to be settled at Nancy and insisted on inserting in the treaty the clauses relating to the use of this strategic road.

After reflecting for a few moments, I decided to abandon on this point the wording that we had adopted the day before. It was agreed, firstly, that there would be on the road from Metz to Verdun, at Etain and at Conflans, two stages where the passing troops should be lodged, and which would each be occupied by a half-battalion; the occupying troops would retain on this road the right that they had exercised until now in the occupied territories.

I obtained that the evacuation of these staging posts on the same date as Verdun should be clearly specified in the article. After this concession, and as I pointed out to the prince the responsibility I was taking in accepting it, he said to me in a half-serious tone: "Do you know that there will be people who will declare me a traitor to the fatherland?"

I am going to attract the criticism of the military party that held Belfort. And finally, he continued, I am losing one of my best friends, General de Manteuffel." There was some exaggeration in the statement: the general was not one of Bismarck's best friends, and I doubt, after all that M. Thiers has written to me, that he would have disapproved so much of the substitution of Verdun for Belfort.

It was thus, with great insistence, and by settling all the points, as I wrote to M. Thiers, that after a conference of an hour and a half, I was able to finish. But the unexpected length of this new session delayed the time of the appointment for the signature. It was past five o'clock when our secretaries had finished transcribing the convention; finally, we were able to sign!

I hastened to telegraph this result to the government

but the session of the National Assembly was over, and M. Thiers was unable, to his great regret and mine, to announce the happy event to him that same evening.

On March 15, 1873, a dispatch from Berlin to Mr. Thiers informed him that the last convention had been signed. He immediately summoned the ministers to the room where they were accustomed to deliberate. They had barely gathered there when they saw him arrive, raising the dispatch in the air as a sign of joy and triumph. It was the liberation of the territory." (Jules Simon, le gouvernement de M. Thiers, t. II, p. 228.)

The grand reception at the French embassy, which has been mentioned in the dispatches of the last few days, took place on the evening of the 15th and was attended by many people from the court and the diplomatic corps.

The Emperor came there with the Empress and the other princes of the imperial and royal house, the hereditary grand duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Duke Elimar of Oldenburg, Prince Frederick of Hohenzollern, etc. Prince Bismarck also came there, despite his increasingly pronounced reluctance to leave his house in the evening. When the Emperor had entered, I had the honor of informing him of the telegram that M. Thiers had sent me for his benefit, and which was worded in these terms;

Versailles, March 15,

To my dear Mr. Viscount de Gontaut-Biron,

I hope that when this telegram reaches you, the treaty that has occupied us for so long will be signed, and that in receiving this evening His Majesty the Emperor of Germany and King of Prussia, you will be able to thank her, both for her

presence, and for the assistance she has given us in a long and difficult work.

"Thank her, for my part, for having, by today's treaty, contributed to healing the wounds of war and facilitated, as much as it is in her power, the appeasement of the passions which have recently devastated the world. This is the definitive peace which we have just signed, and this peace between two great nations will be a sure guarantee of universal peace which Europe cannot fail to rejoice in,

"Receive, my dear Monsieur le Viscount, the expression of my sincere attachment."

The Emperor replied to me: "You have been able to see from my speech, at the opening of Parliament, what confidence is inspired in me by all that you have done in France. It is truly prodigious that you are able to pay in 1873 sums which you were only required to pay in 1875. This prompt release exceeds all expectations.

What resources in your country!" And His Majesty continued with a gracious accent: "You are satisfied, we are too; it is the proof that what we have just done was truly good."

In view of this whole passage, M. de Gontaut had put, in the margin of his manuscript, this note in pencil: Correct this passage, with fewer compliments for the Emperor and some bitterness at the difficulties that have been made to me.

During the evening, the Emperor spoke in a language similar to that of my secretaries who had assisted me very usefully in the preparation of the instruments of the treaty, M. Debains. He was kind enough to express his satisfaction that my signature had been affixed to the bottom of the convention. It has, in fact, come back to me, from the diplomatic corps as well as from the court, that the formal will of the Emperor was

that the negotiations should be concluded and that the treaty should be signed before the evening when he would go to the concert that I had prepared at the embassy. The Empress would have greatly encouraged this good grace of the Emperor. By a happy coincidence which, I was told, would not have escaped Their Majesties, at the same date, two years previously, the German sovereign had left France on his return from the war, and this visit to the embassy, which that evening was generally called the reconciliation visit, would perhaps have seemed to them a good omen, as a result of this coincidence.

The Emperor also told M. Debains that he considered the convention salutary for our relations, that he was delighted with the good effect it was producing in France, and that it would contribute, he sincerely hoped, to appeasing many disagreements. The language of the semi-official newspapers translated this satisfaction and these hopes; they were expressed elsewhere than in their columns. Only the military party seemed to sulk; was it to this impression that I should attribute the absence of most of the military leaders of some notoriety at my evening? It is not impossible. However, a few days later, I had the honour of meeting Prince Frederick Charles, and he said to me, in almost the same terms as the Emperor: "I compliment you on the convention. You are pleased with it, and I am also pleased."

I read in my private notes of the evening of 15 March and the 16th:

I receive numerous compliments from almost all my colleagues, ambassadors and ministers. The English ambassador told me that this treaty was a diplomatic success for France, and he was kind enough to add: "Very important for you, a newcomer to diplomacy, which he poses very well!" Most of the other compliments are in the same vein. I was very

sensitive to them. I did not believe I had deserved them so much. The tributes are still addressed to M. Thiers, and it is only fair.

On the other hand, not a single German congratulated me, except the Duke of Ratibor (Hohenlohe), on the treaty itself, Radziwill and Hatzfeldt on my Grand Cross, and Secretary of State Balan on both things.

The Saxon Minister, Kœnneritz, assures me that Bismarck greatly exaggerated in emphasizing the resistance of the Emperor. The Emperor would have insisted, he said, on making the treaty and finishing it without delay.

On the 16th, I wrote to M. Thiers, to whom I did not want to leave anything unknown about what I was doing, feeling, or hearing said.

The concert had barely ended when I wrote to him: "I have only a few moments left before the departure of the courier charged with bringing you the text of the treaty very quickly.

I do not want to let him leave without telling you that I consider myself very happy to have finished, despite the new conditions that were imposed on me at the last minute, and from which there was no way of escaping without breaking, or at least delaying indefinitely the conclusion. I sincerely hope that you will be satisfied. "Finally, I wish to express my gratitude for the token of satisfaction that the Council of Ministers has granted me, on your proposal, and which touches and honors me infinitely, while recognizing, as I have already written to you, that my services do not deserve such a reward. It is to your initiative that I owe it; it has been for me a new and precious sign of your goodwill and your friendship, just as the mission of participating in this negotiation has proven to me the confidence that you are willing to have in me.

"It was not without difficulty that we came to an agreement. Prince Bismarck felt well that he was committed to Verdun, but he wanted until the last moment to make me give it up. He reproached himself, he told me, for having had this "unfortunate thought" which earned him a lot of opposition, a lot of trouble; but the fact is that he could have made me pay more dearly for it. I had to agree to some concessions: first because you recommended me above all not to give in on the essential point, to which I held as much as you, and because after all these concessions were neither unreasonable nor very important. It seems certain that the military party has created the most possible obstacles to the negotiation; also Mr. de Bismarck laughingly maintained yesterday, in our last session, that France owed him the highest of its decorations (if he did not already have it) for the prodigious efforts he had to deploy in order to defend our interests! You have long known the ill will of the military party.

One of my colleagues, an ambassador, assured me just now that only three weeks ago, it was intended to keep fifty thousand men on French territory, until the last village had to be evacuated. What contributed to making me believe the information to be correct was that on my entry, at two o'clock, to the Chancellor's, when he warned me of the serious objections of the military party and the King, he spoke to me of an army corps to be maintained at the stages and on the line from Verdun to Metz, that is to say a fairly large number of battalions, several squadrons and artillery. Fortunately, these demands, which were not the Chancellor's, came down in our final agreement to half a battalion per stage, outside the garrison of Verdun; I did not think it necessary to insist on obtaining less. And, to be fair, it must be recognized that Prince Bismarck brought to the negotiations a breadth of vision and a good will which hastened the conclusion.

I do not return, I wrote in conclusion, to your reproaches of having weakly supported Verdun and to the assertion of having transferred the negotiation from Paris to Berlin; I am convinced that now you know what to think in these two respects. I was not too moved by it, moreover, because I understood your own emotions, etc."

A few days later, I wrote again to Mr. Thiers to associate myself very cordially with the whole country, with Europe itself, in the well-deserved homage that the Assembly had paid him regarding the treaty. It is a true sacrifice that you have accomplished, I added, you and M. de Rémusat, in consenting to the transfer of the negotiations and the signing of the treaty in Berlin; I understood it and I will not bargain my gratitude; everyone will know moreover that the inspiration and the direction came from you.

I had the opportunity to explain to the government the causes which would have acted according to me on the mind of the Emperor and on that of his Chancellor to dispose them to negotiate.

Independently of the great pleasure of receiving in a short time, and with the best possible security, the complement of the war indemnity, I had to cite the reserve kept by France with regard to the new republic of Spain. Our abstention was considered as a pledge given by us to the European order. To this must be added the favourable outcome of our parliamentary debates, the very significant impression that had been produced on the mind of the Emperor by the communications on the state of our internal affairs that I had been able to send him, either directly through the Chancellor, or indirectly through his most familiar entourage.

We have seen that the bill, on which Mr. Thiers and the Commission of Thirty had reached agreement, had been presented to the Assembly by the Duke of Broglie, in a report read on February 21. The discussion had begun on February 27, and it had just been voted on March 13, by 407 votes against 225.

I had been positively informed, in fact, for several months, that the Emperor would gain confidence in France the day when the agreement was made and maintained between the conservative majority of the National Assembly and M. Thiers.

As for the Chancellor, it was obviously not without reasons that he had carried out the conclusion of our arrangements so quickly. He incontestably wanted, at the present time, to complete the work of German unity; he was quite ready to crush the particularist resistances which were hindering this work, and, to undertake it, he needed all his time, all his activity and all his energy.

To refer to a quasi-confidence which had been made to me by a foreign diplomat, very friendly to Germany, at the same time as a decided adversary of England and Russia, very cold moreover towards France, the eagerness of Prince Bismarck would have been due mainly to his desire to be rid of affairs with France, to be ready to take a position in the Eastern question, of which he foresaw the imminent reopening. Mr. Bancroft, Minister of the United States, — for it is of him that we are speaking, — had recently returned from a trip to Constantinople, struck by the decomposition of Turkey and convinced of the efforts which England and Russia were preparing to collect the succession. Austria would be alarmed, and Germany, interested in seeing the Austro-Hungarian Empire aim at its development on the side of the lower

Danube, would be disposed to support it in the event of a struggle. But, in such an occurrence, according to him, it was hoped in Berlin that France would adopt a line of conduct which would not engage us in a path opposed to that of the German cabinet. It would have been desired that it would consolidate good relations with Italy and come to an agreement with it to adopt an identical policy and in agreement with the interests of the two powers in the East. Thus, the agreement between Austria and Germany, on the one hand, Italy and France, on the other, would have constituted a sufficiently powerful group to make prevail a solution of the Eastern question in conformity with the interests of central Europe, contrary to the passions of England and the ambitious aims of Russia.

I listened to Mr. Bancroft without contradicting him, considering it to be in our interest to hear a diplomatist, who lived in the Chancellor's intimacy, to develop a plan in which I could find clarifications on the more conciliatory attitude of the powerful minister towards us, and on the policy which perhaps - for I saw nothing very precise in these confidences - haunted his mind. In the information which I gave to M. de Rémusat on this subject, I find the following: "I had believed to have noticed, for quite a long time already, that an almost intimate understanding on all questions of general policy did not exist only between Germany and Austria, but also between Austria and Italy. Half by questioning, half by assertion, I managed to have these suppositions confirmed, and my colleague was led to conclude with me that they rested on very serious foundations..."

I concluded my presentation with these lines: "It is certain that the internal situation of Germany is the first concern of Prince Bismarck, that the principal objective of his policy is the consolidation of Germanic unity. The opening of

the Eastern question appears to him as a not very distant eventuality. He wants to strengthen his alliance with Italy and Austria. He does not want to absolutely exclude the possibility of admitting us there. He is especially anxious to have no more embarrassment on the side of France.

"To this I must add that our internal situation inspires more confidence in Germany. The desire to consolidate the personal situation of Mr. Thiers contributed greatly to the success of the negotiation for the liberation of the territory."

The President of the Republic and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were quick to respond to my last telegram and my letters.

On March 18, Mr. Thiers wrote me a letter in which he told me about the effect produced in France by the treaty and tried to explain to me and even to justify, to a certain extent, the concerns which had motivated this agitated telegram which I reported above. But what struck me and surprised me was the illusion he had and which he showed several times, with a certain complacency, in the course of his letter, about the substitution of Verdun for Belfort, a substitution in which the truth is that he had nothing to do. Let us judge for ourselves, here is his letter:

*This letter is not in the collection of correspondence
Occupation and liberation of the territory.*

Versailles, Tuesday, March 18, 1873.

My dear Monsieur de Gontaut,

"I received the definitive text of the treaty yesterday and I found it clear, clean, which rarely happens with things that the Germans have handled a lot. The effect here is considerable, and the substitution of Verdun for Belfort has

produced the effect that I expected. For a long time, I had no doubt, for my part, about the sincerity of the Prussian government with regard to Belfort; but there reigned in the whole country inveterate distrusts, which only the substitution of Verdun for Belfort could cure, and which would have taken away all value from the treaty if they had not succeeded in curing them. Fortunately, we have obtained the result that I desired, and the effect is complete. Thank Mr. Bismarck for having yielded to our wishes. In doing what he did, it was necessary to reap the price, and this price has been obtained. It is a considerable appeasement of national passions, and greater guarantees of peace. In this respect, the progress is immense. We can count on an invariable attachment to the policy of peace and on a rigorous punctuality in keeping our commitments at the agreed times.

"Now, there remain for me some obscurities difficult to penetrate, relative to the negotiation, obscurities which have moreover only a historical interest, but which I wish to point out to you in order to explain my concerns of the last moment.

"From the beginning, two centers sought to attract the negotiation, Paris and Nancy. In Paris, not very great ardor, and simply the necessary; in Nancy, a lot of effort, on the contrary, to bring the negotiations there, saying that Mr. d'Arnim had become suspect to Mr. Bismarck, and that through him we would not obtain much. (I do not need to tell you that this requires absolute secrecy.)

I lent myself to all of Nancy's confidences, without bias and with a certain gratitude for good everyday procedures. What helped me turn to Nancy was your testimony, which was quite consistent with what the general-in-chief of the army of occupation had me say.

"Finally, the moment came when the action became more lively, and when it was necessary to take a clearer view,

and I very categorically stated that to retain Belfort was to spoil the whole treaty and make it unfortunate and even worse, worse than if we did nothing. On that, I was given many words of honor that there was no ulterior motive in Berlin.

I believed it, but I insisted. Well! I must say that I found a lot of good feelings on the part of Mr. d'Arnim and a sincere effort to find something that satisfied me. However, nothing precise, when suddenly the vague idea of substituting another place for Belfort broke through. I had already said: But let us look, let us look for something else, and almost simultaneously, you told me that Belfort was not the last word of Mr. de Bismarck. For his part, Mr. d'Arnim insinuated something similar to me.

I threw myself on it and I did not let go.

"It was then that a series of assertions began in Nancy like these: But they complain that you do not explain yourself, that you offer nothing, etc., etc. It was very unfair, because I offered sure, prompt payments, but I did not admit that Belfort was being held back. Mr. d'Arnim himself did not bring me a text, and I had given him one, the one I sent you.

In this text, Mr. Thiers granted the evacuation of Belfort two months after that of the rest of the territory. How then can he affirm that in his proposal he did not admit that Belfort should be retained? (G.-B.)

Almost at the same time a sort of storm broke out against Mr. d'Arnim, and from Nancy I was written that it was from him that the slowness, the obscurities came, and that he was authorized to negotiate for Verdun or for Belfort, at my choice. At the same time, he came to tell me that he was finally authorized to negotiate according to my bases, with the

power to choose between Verdun and Belfort. "It was strange to speak of my choice, as if it could have been doubtful, when I had not ceased to stubbornly refuse the retention of Belfort. On the spot, I took Mr. d'Arnim literally, I accepted the text that came from Berlin; I modified it a little to make it clear (these are the modifications that I sent you), and we made a date to sign the next day, at five o'clock, at my house. It was the 14th. Everything was arranged, when the news arrived that Mr. de Bismarck wanted the signature to be given in Berlin.

"I had no objection, and I consented to it on the spot, with one fear, however, that of losing time and giving rise to regrets concerning Belfort.

A dispatch from you of the 14th,

This is an error by Mr. Thiers: it was dated the 13th.

(G.-B.)

repeating to me a conversation the day before with Mr. de Bismarck and indicating a certain displeasure at the substitution of Verdun, came to add to my worries. Then suddenly a dispatch from Nancy arrived, which I will show you; it contained these words:

14, three o'clock in the evening, - Everything is ready for the signing of the convention, but today, at four o'clock (?), "M. de Gontaut declared that he did not yet know your decision on Verdun or Belfort." Immediately, I glimpsed in all this some singular, somewhat obscure, plots to go back, which was confirmed to me by a word very sincerely said by M. d'Arnim: We will try to go back on our word.

It was then that I wrote you a very decided dispatch (sic), and so decided that, without the substitution of Verdun, I would not have given in. I wanted, and I did well (sic), to inspire in you the resolution not to give in at any price on Belfort.

The next day, the 15th, the day of the signing, would you believe it? I received a long dispatch from Nancy, a dispatch from a sincere friend,

It was a dispatch addressed by the Count of Saint-Vallier to Mr. Thiers, at the instance of General de Manteuffel: "M. de Manteuffel asks me to tell you that he wants to respond, as a sincere friend, to the proofs of friendship that you give him; he wants you to know that the acceptance of the substitution of Verdun for Belfort is regarded in Berlin as an act of defiance on your part; military precautions will be taken, and many delays and troubles await us, etc." (See Occupation and liberation of the territory" vol. II, p. 350.)

I was told, urging me not to insist on the substitution of Verdun for Belfort, assuring me that the King was sorry about it, and that if I made this concession, he would later renounce Belfort of his own accord.

I made a very harsh reply, recalling the promise to reduce the number of troops, which had never been kept.

Finally, on the 15th, everything ended in Berlin with an attempt directed against you, which I had ordered you to repel. I believe that all this must be attributed to a double game, played in Nancy to use the King's name with me and make me give up Belfort. I cannot explain all these statements and contradictions otherwise; but all this is not very criminal. Seeing me originally decided on Belfort (sic), they weakened, and Verdun was insinuated; then they wanted to take it back, and Nancy was used. As for d'Arnim, I have nothing to reproach him for, and once authorized to say: Verdun, he did not budge.

"All that matters little. The result is acquired, that is the essential. Men are fickle, one must know how to be so with

regard to oneself, by becoming inflexible when it is necessary to break through obstacles, instead of avoiding them. Do not say a word about all this, which I confide to your honor. A word said would set us at odds with people who are good, after all, of whom we have no serious reason to complain, and who, moreover, have played the game of their country. There is nothing clumsier than complaining. It is the whining kind that must be left to women. One should only complain when one wants to break off, and one should only break off when the public interest requires that one break off, and this must be done when it is necessary. "Farewell, my dear Monsieur de Gontaut. We have done good work, and it is to be hoped that we will do more. Farewell, farewell, and silence.

"I am sending you this letter by your young man.

"P.S. — You will soon have the ratification."

There are errors in this account of the negotiations and their twists and turns that should be noted. I remember being very struck by them the very day I received the letter.

On rereading it carefully sixteen years later, my impression is absolutely identical to that of the first day.

Mr. Thiers, speaking, as is evident from the context of his letter, of a time prior to my interview with Prince Bismarck and the latter's proposal to substitute Verdun for Belfort, repeats the same allegation several times:

"... I have categorically affirmed," he said, "that retaining Belfort, it was to spoil the whole treaty, to make it worse than if nothing was done..."

I did not admit that Belfort should be retained...

I had not ceased to stubbornly refuse the retention of Belfort...

Seeing me, from the *beginning*, decided on Belfort, they weakened and they insinuated Verdun..."

If the reader would be so kind as to recall the documents he has just read, he will see that, in the language of Mr. Thiers, there is at least a considerable ambiguity. Was Mr. Thiers, from the beginning, decided not to accept the retention of Belfort? Was he resolved to substitute another place for Belfort, and, for this purpose, did he seek "something else", as he wrote to me? Be that as it may, in his numerous letters, as in the letters of Mr. de Rémusat, absolutely nothing was said to me of these resolutions, before the day when I sent word to Mr. Thiers, not as a vague idea, but as a firm proposition of the Chancellor of Germany, that we could keep Belfort and replace this place with another. It would be very strange, one will agree, if I had been kept informed of what was to be done, and if I had been given instructions to negotiate, while passing over in silence resolutions which were to be an important element of the negotiation.

What is a fact is that this negotiation took a serious form from March 1st.

Mr. Thiers writes to me that he accepts the retention of Belfort. His letter, which is dated March 9th, has been read above. He had originally asked, it is true, that the entire occupied territory be returned to us at once, against payment of almost the entire indemnity and the most solid assurances for the rest; but, while hoping that his proposal would not be rejected in Berlin, he had drawn up and sent me a draft treaty, in which Belfort was not to be evacuated until the last hour and after all the other points had been occupied.

I add that having learned of another text proposed by the Chancellor and communicated to him by General de Manteuffel, M. Thiers had me telegraphed, during the day of March 11, by M. de Rémusat, to no longer insist on his own evacuation project and that he accepted, in short, the Berlin project. Now, this project

stipulated that Belfort would be the last point of the territory occupied by the Germans and would not be evacuated until two months after the others. (G.-B.)

M. Thiers was therefore mistaken in writing to me in this last letter: "that he had never admitted that Belfort should be retained", "that he had never ceased to stubbornly refuse the retention of Belfort." It was therefore for him a point acquired in the negotiation, when I telegraphed him, on the 11th, that Belfort was no longer required and that we were free to choose another place as the last point of occupation.

Moreover, it is enough, to appreciate M. Thiers' illusion, to refer to the letter that M. de Rémusat wrote to me, on the 12th, after the telegram in which I gave him an account of my interview with Prince Bismarck; his emotion could be read in every line, and the President, according to him, was hardly calmer; and he said to me: "The substitution of Verdun for Belfort is a piece of good fortune, which we would have dared to imagine."

As for the "decided" dispatch, by which M. Thiers wanted, he said, to inspire me with the resolution not to give in on Verdun, I will answer this:

In the first place, the news which had provoked it was gossip, or, to put it better, pure slander.

On the 14th, at four o'clock, I was unable to declare anything to Prince Bismarck, for the simple reason that I did not see him at that time.

I do not note the contradiction presented by the dispatch sent from Nancy to M. Thiers with regard to the times. "Today, says this dispatch, at four o'clock, M. de Gontaut declared, etc." and the dispatch is dated the 14th, three o'clock. (G.-B.)

I did not see him until the evening. At four o'clock, I had just written to Prince Bismarck that, following telegrams announcing that the negotiation would end at Versailles, Mr. Thiers had agreed on all points with Mr. Count d'Arnim and was going to sign with him, that, consequently, my mission appeared to be completed. I therefore had no declaration to make to him concerning Mr. Thiers' resolutions.

In the second place, since the day when the President telegraphed me his acceptance of Verdun substituted for Belfort, the thought of yielding to the Chancellor's solicitations has never even entered my mind. Thus, it will perhaps be remembered that in alluding to Mr. Thiers' acceptance, on the 11th, of the treaty sent from Berlin, the Chancellor, finding me intractable on the maintenance of the substitution, reproached me for being more royalist than the king. If I nevertheless consulted my government again on this same point, I did so, I have already said, at the formal request of the Chancellor, to whom I could not properly oppose a refusal. Moreover, one should not confuse with personal irresolution the duty which falls, in this age of telegraphs in particular, to every diplomatic agent, to refer to his chief for all important circumstances.

At the same time as the letter from M. Thiers, I received another from M. de Rémusat, also dated March 18.

It is so kind that I hesitated to transcribe it; I will be forgiven for having decided to do so, reflecting that it is the work of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the intimate collaborator of the head of government, of the one from whom the President hid none of his thoughts, and before whose eyes all the pieces of the negotiation passed.

His testimony is therefore very particularly precious to me.

Paris, March 18, 1873.

"I do not want to let M. de Kergorlay leave, my dear ambassador, without thanking you again for the great service you have rendered us. I have always attached the greatest value to the relations that circumstances, certainly very unforeseen for both of us, have allowed me to have with you. The value has been increased even more, since we can have in common, in our lives, the memory of the event in which we have just participated.

"Do not, I beg you, keep any concern about the error into which, in a moment of agitation, the President fell, by supposing that you could have had a little less decision on a point that had become difficult. Prince Bismarck, obviously wanting to run after the concession of Verdun, wrote repeatedly to M. de Manteuffel that M. Thiers' instructions were not clear on this point, that France did not hold resolutely to it, and we were so moved by this singular language, that the President sought the explanation everywhere and was able to accept at times the most improbable of all. But a telegram from you was enough to dispel this idea, and I believe he does not remember having had it. "Arnim is even more surprised and angry at what has happened. He is looking for an explanation and cannot find it. He is still unaware of Bismarck's frequent correspondence with Manteuffel; he persists in believing that they are not on good terms. We have kept a discreet silence on all this, and I believe that we must continue to be discreet. I imagine that the Chancellor had already taken a dislike to his ambassador some time ago. He will have found his letters more equivocal than they were. At least we have found Arnim, in this whole affair, clearer and more benevolent than he usually is. As for the powers, he came on March 14.

It would be, according to Mr. Thiers, on the 13th, that Count Arnim came to see him; he telegraphed it to me the same day. (G.-B.)

to bring a draft which he said was agreed; at the first word, he conceded, like an authorized man, Verdun for Belfort. I saw him in the evening; we have agreed together on the final text, and we made time to sign the next day. It was the following Saturday morning that, to the person I sent him to collate the French and German expeditions, he declared that he had just received the notice that M. de Bismarck wanted to sign in Berlin. But that day and since, he has not ceased to hold, at least for us, excellent language.

"I do not need to tell you that your treaty is producing the best effect, and that universally. I do not know of any censor for it. May we find in this happy event new reasons to be united and wise.

"Adieu, Monsieur, accept the expression of my most devoted feelings."

On March 19, the treaty was ratified by the National Assembly, and the next day M. Thiers sent me the following telegram:

Versailles, March 20.

"I have just signed the ratifications, and the courier who carries them leaves this evening for Berlin. He will be there tomorrow evening, Friday. Arrange everything so that the exchange takes place on Saturday without fail, because it is the last day of the deadline set. A thousand affectionate compliments."

M. de Rémusat sent me the same notice in a letter dated the same day and which I reproduce: Versailles, Thursday, March 20, 1873.

"... Our treaty was voted on with a benevolent unanimity, and I am sending it to you ratified. You will be able to make the exchange within the desired time.

"I await the details that you announce to me; they will be of great interest to us. I hope that they will not take away from me, like an illusion, the thought that I have kept from all this affair: it is that all things considered we have to praise ourselves for all those with whom we have dealt.

"I would conclude that we must, if possible, put a little relaxation in our daily relations with Prussia, and prove what we have always maintained, that the evacuation would complete and consolidate the peace. The occupation, as long as it lasts, is like an image of war."

A few words followed on the Spanish government, "this informing government," he said, "to which we must always show goodwill, but no confidence," and on a recent dispatch from our ambassador in Madrid: M. de Bouille said there that from several sides he was assured of a silent work of Iberian unity, continuing tirelessly on the part of Prussia, and M. de Rémusat, without absolutely believing this assertion, nevertheless recommended to me a certain vigilance on this side. Then he added: "The movement of opinion produced by the treaty leads to the suspension, at least momentarily, of the dissidences and their effects. I hope that the Assembly will pass peacefully the days that separate us from the prorogation, a natural consequence of the holy days and the sessions of the general councils. We believe therefore to be able to count on at least six weeks of tranquility." A few days later, in replying to the President with a few words on the subject of certain inexplicable obscurities, for the moment, which had occurred in the negotiation and of which he had spoken to me, I warmly recommended to him all the personnel of the embassy, in whom I always found a support full of zeal and devotion, but of whom I had had especially much to praise in the present circumstance; I asked: in the absence of advancement, the cross for MM. d'Aubigny and Fourchon, to

whom it had been promised during the war. I insisted with M. de Rémusat in the same sense. In my letter to the latter, I expressed the hope that everyone in France today would understand the need for calm and peace.

I ended it with some good news about Spain and even Portugal: no Hohenzollern candidacy to fear. Prince Charles-Antoine and his son had just given formal assurances of this to the Portuguese Minister in Berlin, Count de Rilvas.

On March 19, at the request of the builders of a beautiful passageway going from the Allée des Linden to the corner of Behrenstrasse and Friedrichstrasse, the Emperor agreed to inaugurate its opening, and in the upper apartments of the passageway he gave a very intimate evening to which he was kind enough to invite the ambassadors.

Here are a few lines from my notes that I reproduce because they mention the treaty of March 15:

The Queen approached me several times. After thanking me for the evening given at the embassy, she told me that she was "very happy" that my signature had been affixed to the treaty; it was, in her eyes, the reward for the noble sacrifice made by me, in accepting the mission of coming to represent my country in Germany. Then she spoke to me, as she usually does, of her anxieties for the future. On all sides the horizon seemed to her to be laden with storms, moral disorder to be making progress. Her heart was still heavy.

On April 4, Bleichroeder came to see me and confided in me the eventualities of the succession of Count d'Arnim to the embassy in Paris; according to him, it would probably fall to General de Manteuffel; M. d'Arnim would be sent to London, at least for a time. He would prefer Rome,

but Bismarck did not want to have this good grace for him. These arrangements, moreover, would not, it seems, be of long duration; later one would think of Count Munster for

London, of Prince de Reuss for Paris where he would like to return, of Count Hatzfeldt for Dresden, of M. de

Keudell for Rome instead of Constantinople, which he would perhaps yield to M. de Radovsditz, etc. I told him about the person sent to Paris, whoever he was, that he should, in my opinion and in the interest of a good reception, arrive only after the total evacuation, and that is indeed how it was understood, Bleichroeder replied to me. He then asked me, very confidentially and assuming that I would agree to answer him, if it was true that I had asked Prince Bismarck for the recall of Count Arnim, at least if M. Thiers had expressed the desire for it in one way or another. It did not hurt me at all to answer him, with absolute frankness, that I had never opened my mouth about it either to the Chancellor or to any agent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This denial seemed to surprise him. Was it Mr. Bismarck who had insinuated the thing to Bleichroeder?

I vaguely had the thought of it from the latter's words.

I resumed with the same assurance that I had never said a single word about it, that in truth Mr. Thiers had feared at one time that the black mood of Count Arnim and the disappointments he had experienced in Parisian society, quite contrary to Mr. Thiers' wishes certainly, had rubbed off on the impressions that the ambassador collected in France and brought back to Berlin, but that the President had never for that reason requested, through me or anyone else, his recall.

M. de Rémusat, to whom I communicated my conversation with Bleichroeder, replied to me: "At no time have we had the slightest reason to wish that M. d'Arnim should leave us. We have only to praise our relations with him, and, in recent times, in particular,

his feelings and his actions have only added to the esteem that we have for him. (G.-B.)

Bleichroeder assured me that from his first communications to the President, made according to orders from Berlin, Count Arnim had written to Prince Bismarck to ask him very urgently not even to let me suspect them, and this was a new subject of displeasure of the Chancellor. A few weeks after my conversation with the negotiating banker, I was assured that Prince Bismarck and Mr. d'Arnim had exchanged, quite recently, a very sour correspondence, the result of which would be that the ambassador, recalled from Paris, would receive, at least for the moment, no compensation.

I took a fortnight's leave at the beginning of April; I went, accompanied by my children, to spend it in Paris. I dined at Mr. Thiers's with my two eldest daughters, Marie and Adèle. The other guests were: the German ambassador and ambassador, Mr. and Mrs. Casimir-Perier, the minister of Holland, Mr. de Zuylen and his wife, sister of my colleague from Holland in Berlin, Mr. Rochussen, Count Horace de Choiseul, Count Duchâtel, Mr. Mignet, Count de Tréveneuc, Mr. Barthélémy Saint-Hilaire, etc. In the evening, there were many people. The convention of March 15 was still very recent, and people were kind enough to speak to me with praise of the part I had taken in it and of the success it had, a success even greater than I had hoped. My conscience would have reproached me, if I had not attributed a good part of these compliments to the direction I had received from Messrs. Thiers and Rémusat. This is what I did. Among the people who showed me the most kindness, I remember with pleasure the names of all the guests at the dinner first, with the exception of a friend of M. Thiers, M. Mignet; then General de Chabaud-

Latour, the Minister of the Interior, M. de Goulard, whom death was to take from us too soon, M. Alphonse de Rothschild, M. Lefébure, the Count of Hespel, M. de Mérode, M. Bérenger, M. Bethmont, my colleague in the deputation of the Basses-Pyrénées, Lestapis, the Minister of Public Works, M. de Fourtou, Othenin d'Haussonville, M. de Kersaint, etc.

But if there was a stopping point in the preoccupations of foreign policy, I soon realized, not without sadness, that there was none in the internal divisions.

The Lamourette kiss that the various parties of the Assembly had given each other, more or less willingly, it is true, after the discussions raised by M. Thiers' message, had been very quickly forgotten; each had resumed its combat positions, its grudges, its distrust, and the hope of overthrowing its adversaries; these were sentiments which, unfortunately, reigned as much on one side of the Assembly as on the other. The left noisily supported the thesis that the Assembly had been appointed only to make peace, and, in the last arrangements concluded, it saw and proclaimed aloud the signal for dissolution.

Neither M. Thiers nor the majority shared this opinion; but either because of the discussions raised by the divergence of opinions on this point, or because of the divisions in the Assembly which could make its dissolution necessary, one day or another, the fact is that this question was very much agitated in political circles.

I had the regret of finding M. Thiers in a bad mood. The evening when I dined at the Presidency, we exchanged a few words on the possible elections. According to him, the radicals, from fifty that they were in the current Assembly, would count a hundred votes in the new Chamber, and the right, instead of two hundred votes, would have only fifty. The

majority would be composed of members belonging to the centers. I asked M. Thiers if he did not believe by chance that he would gain from the change. "Certainly," he answered me. And M. Thiers was not a man to remain platonically in his opinions. What struck me, moreover, and distressed me just as much, was the discouragement that I observed and which was not hidden from me, among the deputies of the centres, with regard to the composition of the future Chamber. I have perhaps not met, in the first days, a single deputy who did not confide a similar impression to me; each, it is true, attributed to parties other than his own, the responsibility for the embarrassments that would arise. To all I preached appeasement, concord, sincerely animated by a conviction that I did not hide, that the divisions and the struggles in the Assembly would create serious embarrassments for us abroad. It was not the first time that I supported this opinion.

I still remember having discussed at length the fusion between the princes, at the evening of Mr. Thiers, with MM. de Ghabaud-Latour and Bocher. On this side, happy symptoms were to occur during the same year.

Before leaving for Berlin, I had several interviews with M. Thiers. The very day I took leave of him, we had a rather lively conversation about his attitude, and, although I have not found a note of it, I remember very well having said to him on his doorstep:

"So, you do not want to place yourself among the conservatives?" "No," replied M. Thiers clearly. "Well! take care that it is not your downfall."

I was not to see M. Thiers again. I did not believe I was such a good prophet. Indeed, a few days later, M. de Rémusat's candidacy in Paris failed against that of a former radical teacher from Lyon, M. Barodet, and on the following

24th May, M. Thiers resigned in the face of a vote of censure carried by the conservative majority of the Assembly.

CHAPTER IX

THE FALL OF M. THIERS

Conversation of M. de Gontaut with Prince Bismarck. — Electoral failure of Mr. de Rémusat in Paris. — Optimism of Mr. Thiers. — Concerns abroad and efforts of Mr. de Gontaut to calm them. — The tone of the German press. — Letters from M. de Gontaut to M. de Rémusat. — The resignation of Mr. Thiers. — Opinion of Mr. de Gontaut on this event. — His letters to Mr. Thiers and M. de Rémusat and their responses.

Barely back in Berlin, I was invited with the diplomatic corps to the wedding of the Emperor's nephew, Prince Albert. The Chancellor was there too; he came to me in good humor, congratulated me on my return and asked me if I was satisfied with everything I had seen in Paris. I answered him in the affirmative, while not hiding from him my regrets about the electoral struggle which was about to open between Mr. de Rémusat and a radical, and whose outcome would probably be such as it has always been under all regimes to date. Paris, the triumph of the advanced candidate. I also did not hide from him that, dining at the President of the Republic with the Count of Arnim, I thought I noticed a certain coldness on his part. Prince Bismarck replied to me that he was not satisfied with Count Arnim; but he spoke much more on this subject, which seems to be close to his heart, with others than me, with Lady Russell, among others. He also told me that he had sent a telegram to Mr. Thiers on the occasion of his birthday.

Not being certain, nevertheless, that it would be pleasant for the latter to receive it directly, he sent it to General de Manteuffel, instructing him to make the use he deemed best. "I cannot hide," he told me, "that my name still arouses great hostilities in France and, consequently, the receipt of a telegram with my signature could well harm the popularity of the person to whom it would be addressed. which must impose a great reserve on me." I replied to the Chancellor that the feelings of which he spoke could only weaken, that Mr. Thiers had been, I knew, very touched by his memory, an impression all the more natural on his part as he had great gratitude for the good will shown by the prince in our negotiations, and that he had specially instructed me to repeat this to him.

A few days later, M. de Rémusat was defeated in the Paris election. It was not an ordinary failure: it was a worrying symptom of the general situation and proof of the illusions that Mr. Thiers had, with an obstinacy destined soon to bring misfortune to himself.

My relations with him were on the point of ending; Until May 24, they limited themselves to an exchange of letters and dispatches on the election of Mr. de Rémusat and to one or two communications relating to the execution of the treaty of March 15.

The official result of the election had barely become known when Mr. Thiers sent me the following telegram:

Paris, Tuesday April 29, 1873.

"The Paris election could be exploited by France's detractors at home. foreigner, who will present the state of the country as once again very alarming. Deny these assertions. The order was perfect and it is real progress to have obtained in Paris, dedicated at all times to the extreme opposition, one

hundred and thirty-five thousand votes for a member of the government, especially after the Lyon question,

The Assembly had just abolished, on April 4, the central town hall of Lyon and subjected this city to a regime similar to that of Paris. Mr. Barodet was former mayor of Lyon.

which made Mr. Barodet important and the deep irritation of the Republican party. "As for the provincial elections, four out of seven are assured; among the three others, one was determined in Marseille by the same currents which produced the election in Paris.

The results of the provincial elections were as follows: a legitimist elected in Morbihan, four candidates belonging to the republican left elected in Corrèze, Gironde, Jura and Marne, two radicals including one, Mr. Lockroy, was elected in Bouches-du-Rhône, and the other in Nièvre. Other elections took place on May 11, five in number, including two for the Rhône department. The latter named two radicals, MM. Ranc and Guyot; a radical was also elected in Loir-et-Cher, a republican in Haute-Vienne and a Bonapartist in Charente-inférieure.

The information provided by the prefects does not give any concern for the general elections, provided that the question of the republic is freed from the great debate which is stirring and that the voters are placed only between the conservative republic and the radical republic. "The ministry will not be modified, because it is the true expression of the President's firm and moderate policy. Public funds have already regained half of what they lost and business is not seriously interrupted. "It is not a false security that I seek to

inspire in you; it is a true and thoughtful security, and I seek to inspire it in you because I sincerely feel it. "Let us therefore have the attitude and the assurance that suit France and the government which directs and will direct its affairs."

Or M. Thiers was very naive and very little perspicacious, and these were not his faults, or else he knew perfectly well, in writing this dispatch, that the election of Paris had cast a dark light on the situation, very little done to inspire the security that he claimed to feel and that he wanted to communicate to others. If public funds had fallen, and if business had been interrupted in France, by Mr. Thiers' own admission, there was no reason to be surprised by the impression of concern caused abroad. by the appointment of a radical, when so few months had passed since the Commune. I did not hide from the President and Mr. de Rémusat my personal impressions following this incident in our domestic policy; they were very opposed to those that Mr. Thiers attributed to himself in his dispatch.

My duty, however, was to calm the concerns that I might encounter in Berlin and to develop arguments likely to prove that the situation was not as dark as one would be tempted to suppose. My patriotism was keen to support, in this regard, the President's intentions; I did not wait, moreover, to know them before carrying out this task. To all my colleagues in the diplomatic corps, I spoke almost the same language. "The election of Paris," I said, "does not mean that Paris has become more revolutionary; never, so to speak, and under any regime whatsoever, has a moderate candidacy triumphed, with the system of list voting. What is a fact in Paris is also a fact in all our large cities, in Lyon, in Marseille, for example; and this fact does not only exist in France: it is found in the large cities of the continent too; in Berlin, in particular, for fifty years,

elections have only produced opposition deputies. It would therefore be to fail to form a fair idea of a country to assess its spirit based on the elections in large cities.

Besides, the number of votes obtained by Mr. de Rémusat has never, as far as I know, been exceeded by a moderate candidate; and, if we add the thirty thousand votes given to Colonel Stoffel (More exactly 26,644), we arrive at a total slightly lower than the votes collected by Mr. Barodet. Moreover, the failure of the minister was foreseen, and we would not have been exposed to it, if his candidacy had not arisen in an unexpected manner and as if outside of any party spirit. It is due neither to the initiative of Mr. de Rémusat, nor to that of Mr. Thiers; it was born spontaneously, without any preparation, during the congratulatory visit made to these two gentlemen by the mayors of Paris, on the occasion of the treaty of March 15. It was a tribute to the patriotism as well as the loyalty and intelligence of Mr. de Rémusat. It was therefore not, in reality, at that moment, a political candidacy; but the radicals gave it this character by opposing one of their own to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the day after a law made by the Assembly on the municipality of Lyon. Therefore, was it possible for Mr. de Rémusat to withdraw? If he withdrew, would he not be proclaiming failure in advance?"

I will add today that, in the given situation, it was better for the minister to withdraw than for a vote to prove to Mr. Thiers, with the brutality of the figures, the strength of the revolutionary element and its superiority over the republic. conservative. If the lesson, it is true, was perfectly useless for him, it was not, at least, for the conservatives of the right, and if Mr. Thiers had been less passionate and less blind, he would have understood that it was not only a question of dampening the echo of revolutionary success abroad, but that it was important, for France and for himself, to ward off its

effects. Shall I say that my explanations have erased the unfortunate effect of our elections? Attenuated would be nearer the truth than erased. They did not destroy it, by a long shot, I cannot hide it from myself, and I find the most marked traces of it in my notes of those days. I will only quote the remarks of two of my colleagues, who enjoyed great respect in Berlin, and with whom I was on a sort of intimacy. "I am very distressed by your elections," Lord Odo Russell told me. "It is sad to see Paris send yet another radical deputy to the Assembly and reject the candidacy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. All this produces a very unfortunate impression everywhere." The Belgian Minister, Mr. Nothomb, to whom I asked, at the end of our conversation, what was said in Belgium, answered me in a somewhat embarrassed and slightly ironic tone: "Since you ask me, I will admit that they say that France is an incorrigible nation. "He claimed, moreover, that the result would not be unfortunate for Belgium; it would increase the strength of the ministry through fear of the radicals, and there was no doubt in his eyes that if there were elections at present, the Catholics would win a resounding victory.

"A similar consequence of what is happening in your country," he said again, "will be seen elsewhere than in Belgium!" These words reminded me of a somewhat similar remark, which had been made to me a few months before by Prince Bismarck.

The German statesmen naturally showed themselves more reserved than my colleagues in diplomacy.

Their feelings, in fact, were quite different. Deep down, they feared any awakening, any symptom of the revolutionary spirit in France, partly because they were not certain that the fire started in our country would not spread its flames to neighboring countries, starting with Alsace, partly and above

all for this reason that I have already mentioned many times, that they had not yet received the entirety of the indemnity. To this double point of view, they were worried and upset by the failure of Mr. de Rémusat; but they showed it to me little, and several of them spoke to me with courtesy, testifying, through their words, that the electoral incident did not exert a significant influence on the esteem they had for France. and in particular for his remarkable and powerful work efforts, nonetheless continuing to value the talents and services of the eminent statesman placed at the head of power in France, and to express their confidence in him and in his Minister of Foreign Affairs, whom they were satisfied to learn of remaining in the cabinet. But if most of them maintained a courteous reserve towards me, they did not observe it to the same degree in their communications with the German public.

On April 29 or 30, the Provincial Correspondence published, on the subject of the visit made at that very moment by the Emperor William, accompanied by Prince Bismarck, to Saint Petersburg, an article which made it known almost officially, in because of his character, the impressions produced in the regions of power. It listed with a sort of complacency all the testimonies of understanding that Germany and Russia had given each other in the past and, alluding to the memories of the Holy Alliance, it represented with a certain insistence the meeting in Petersburg and that which was to take place shortly in Vienna as a strengthening of the agreement established the previous year in Berlin. Then she added this significant sentence: "The importance and immediate scope of the union between the three Emperors increases as the chances that could be based on the quiet and continuous development of affairs in the Western States of the continent..."

I must note, moreover, that this somewhat too transparent allusion to the last elections in France did not produce, in general, a very happy effect in the political world of Berlin, and I wrote to M. de Rémusat that, the Chancellor being in Petersburg when this article appeared, it was reasonable to doubt that it would have seen the light of day if Prince Bismarck had been present in Berlin.

As for the tone of the press, it was as might be expected: they did not miss the opportunity to speak about us with their usual sourness. Except two or three newspapers, of a fairly advanced color, which showed neither surprise nor dissatisfaction with the appointment of Mr. Barodet, the others affected, in general, to show themselves frightened by the turn of the public mind in France: "Definitely," wrote one of the most important, "France wants to try for a red republic," and they declared that it had become entirely necessary to guard against revolutionary errors and French propaganda.

I was therefore obliged to write to the minister that the first impressions, in the German government and in the diplomatic corps, were not satisfactory.

In addition to my official correspondence, I wrote, on May 3, to Mr. de Rémusat the following letter;

Dear Mr. de Rémusat,

First of all, I would like to express to you the regrets I felt at your failure. You have so encouraged my confidence with all your kindness, that you will not mind telling you that I would have liked to see your candidacy, so honorable in itself, placed under auspices other than those of the left ; but as it is impossible, when one has the honor of knowing you, not to have the most perfect esteem for your character and your loyalty, I found many reasons, in the current circumstances, to wish you success. I regret that you found opposition from the

conservatives that you should not have meet... The triumph of your adversary produces the saddest, I should say the darkest, effect everywhere. I find it very difficult to reassure here. We are frightened by the hundred and eighty thousand votes given to Barodet, barely two years after the Commune, and I have heard this sentence come out of the mouths of my interlocutors two or three times, in familiar conversations: You are a group of *incorrigible people*! This is the impression that I fear, because it could be the basis of future policy towards us. I say everything that is possible in terms of explanations, mitigations, clarifications; I am not saying that I completely lose my troubles; but certainly, I have not yet managed to convince.

I confess to you, moreover, it is very difficult for me to share the security of Mr. Thiers; I even regret it in him because it is to be feared that he does not believe he has to modify his behavior, which I believe is essential if he wants to save our country. Arriving at the general elections with only two parties present, the party of the conservative republic and that of the radical republic, would perhaps be a desirable thing, but impractical, and which will not happen. I ask your pardon for expressing myself in this way, because it is also, if I am not mistaken, your opinion. But is it possible to view the nomination of four radicals out of eight elections as something of little importance, which will not have an influence on the next elections, while remaining on the same path we are on today? I can't believe it. You must have no doubt, despite everything, that I am continuing here all my efforts to prevent concerns from having an unfortunate influence on our relations; it is a duty of patriotism, it will not be the least difficult of all those I have had to fulfill since my arrival in Berlin.

A few days later I wrote to the minister again: "I must not hide from you that in high society at least, if not in

government regulations, we are very concerned about France. All the private letters we receive testify to the deepest concerns. We go so far as to say that a radical outcry is imminent. I know from a very good source that French people have purchased ten million shares on the Berlin Stock Exchange over the last few days. I have protested against the thought of riots and I develop all plausible arguments to ward off these terrors and these anxieties; but they nonetheless remain. I admit it to you, it is difficult for me to defend myself from any concern. The facts alone, independently of the comments in the newspapers or the letters, are there to maintain anxiety and to raise fears of very stormy debates when the Assembly returns.

The summary of opinion in Berlin circles seems to me to be this: The progress of radicalism is extremely feared; we are very keen to maintain Mr. Thiers, whose union with the majority we desire; However, we blame the demands of the right and the embarrassment it is said to cause to the President..."

Ten days after my letter, I received, surprised, the following telegrams:

Minister of Foreign Affairs to French representative in
Berlin.

Versailles, May 25, 1 a.m. 16 in the morning.

"Following a vote of no confidence, Mr. Thiers resigned from his position. The National Assembly called Marshal MacMahon to the presidency of the Republic."

"Paris, May 25, 1 a.m. 15 evening. ÿ "Very slightly agitated night session, Thiers resignation accepted by the Assembly. Mac-Mahon nominated by 390 votes, Gréyy one,

some invalid ballots, the rest abstentions. A few cries: long live Thiers! near the prefecture. Paris calm.

Raymond.

Count Raymond de Kergorlay, third secretary of the French embassy in Berlin. (G.-B.)

That was it. Mr. Thiers, persisting in his resolution to refuse to the conservatives of the Assembly the assurances and guarantees which they demanded from him, only received the votes of the minority in a vote on the question of confidence; he immediately retired from the presidency; the conservatives took power. I will not recount the details of this event; eyewitnesses described them. But I will say that emotion was strong in Berlin, both among the diplomatic corps and in the German government. The impressions were shared: some were delighted, others, and among them Prince Bismarck, experienced dissatisfaction from points of view that I will point out later; many were alarmed; I was among the latter.

Everything had happened at Versailles very legally, very correctly, and Mr. Thiers, by having demanded for himself the right of presence and intervention in the discussions of the Assembly, suffered the fate of ministers in parliamentary governments; they must resign when they are outvoted. It is no less true that his exclusion from presidential power, however regular and justified it may have been, was a serious event in a country in the process of reconstituting itself, after disasters which had shaken all its organs. vital. It was no less serious with regard to Europe, worried about the troubled situation of France, and particularly of Germany, given our relations so difficult, so delicate with a ruthless winner, always ready to take advantage of our embarrassments to show himself even more ruthless, who did not intend to lose any of the advantages of his victories, and in whom M. Thiers

inspired more confidence as his successors, whoever they were, and as the Assembly itself, for the regulation of its interests. It was with M. Thiers, head of the executive power of the French Republic, that Prince Bismarck had settled the conditions of peace; it was with the representative of his government that he had just signed the convention of March 15, and, a circumstance as important for the Germans as for us, the convention was in full execution period. Wouldn't a change in executive power create obstacles? It is certain that in Germany people cared about Mr. Thiers, that they would be worried and unhappy at no longer having to deal with him. I have already said it: if, at that time at least, we wanted a union between the President and the conservatives of the Assembly, sympathies were more with the first than with the others.

For all these reasons, I do not hide it, I regretted the distance of Mr. Thiers from his high managerial functions; I found it — and I still hold the same opinion today — at least premature. From my point of view as an agent of France abroad, it was desirable, it would have been more political, to wait for the entire payment of our debt and above all the complete liberation of French soil, to raise the question of confidence about domestic affairs. The point of view of my political friends in Paris was different from mine, and it was only natural. I have expressed more than once their concerns regarding the tendencies of Mr. Thiers, and their renewed efforts without success, unfortunately, to distance him from the left. More and more frightened of the revolutionary progress that was unconsciously favored, perhaps, by the ambition and stubbornness of the President, they resolved to hit on the 1st occasion a decisive blow. "There was not a moment to lose," the Duke of Broglie wrote to me, eight days after the fall of M. Thiers. This expected opportunity presented itself during a discussion in which the conservatives won.

But in Paris, in general, we did not know the terrain on which the French envoy was to operate in Berlin, the numerous demands of the Germans, their susceptibilities, their suspicions and the influence that our internal debates exerted in their country. If the Conservatives had been as convinced of this, perhaps they would have postponed their resolution to raise a government crisis. They would have at least hesitated in their projects if they had been able to understand what was going on in the minds of German statesmen, especially in the minds of the principal among them, of the one whose opinion had weight in the balance of royal resolutions more than all the other opinions combined.

The trial of Count Arnim left no doubt about the intentions and policies of Prince Bismarck; they were developed throughout in his dispatches to the ambassador; he brutally reprimanded the latter for his monarchical tendencies in relation to France, and his desire was to do everything to maintain the republican regime in the country, as being likely to maintain divisions within it and to prevent it from raise Or, Mr. Thiers was the right man to accomplish his designs. If Prince Bismarck, in fact, wanted the maintenance of the republic, he would have displeased him, no matter what. said it, to see her fall into radicalism; revolutionary enterprises and agitations would have created embarrassment for him and would have aroused, in his country itself, certain sympathies likely to hinder his work, perhaps even to encourage certain movements on the part of the socialists, already very numerous in Germany. He therefore much preferred the conservative republic, that is to say a state of things that appeared very suitable, but dissolving from his nature, leading, according to him, to the desired result, which was to weaken France inevitably, although imperceptibly, without violent crisis and without these effervescences which cross the border; and

it was this republic whose exercise the conservatives came to thwart. The Emperor, it is true, of a very conservative temperament, did not harbor such Machiavellian thoughts; but if he did not allow his Chancellor to intervene in matters of the army, he most often left the direction of foreign policy to him, experience having demonstrated to him the most incontestable advantages.

In ordinary times, this consideration would have been precisely a determining reason to substitute another regime for the republic, even a conservative one; but unfortunately! we were not in ordinary times, we had barely emerged from foreign war and civil war, our resources of all kinds were reduced well below what was necessary; We were therefore not yet in a position to do at home what would give us strength and, thereby, throw a sort of challenge to the Germans who saw the preservation of the republic as the only thing favorable to their interests. Prince Bismarck, although he could not conceive any concern about the maintenance of peace or about fidelity to our commitments, was therefore very irritated to see power in France pass from the hands of Mr. Thiers into those of the conservatives, and we did not take long to collect numerous proofs of this. My friends did not have the exact intuition of the consequences of their victory in this respect. To tell the whole truth, I myself did not foresee them to the extent to which they manifested themselves.

Were they right, all things considered, that is to say by balancing the interests of the interior and those of the exterior, to pursue, without further delay, the overthrow of Mr. Thiers? Did they foresee that once the compensation was paid, Germany would no longer have to spare anything, even if Mr. Thiers remained in the presidency? It is difficult to say. Still, from this change of person, the difficulties, the harassment, particularly on the questions of liberation of the territory and

nationality options for the Alsatians-Lorraines, increased. News of this serious event reached the German government as quickly as it did me. On May 25, there was a grand dinner at the English Embassy for the anniversary of the Queen's birth. We can believe that the news from France was the lively text of all conversations; the composition of the new cabinet was impatiently awaited. When I entered the living room, I was surrounded, and, to my great astonishment, several of my colleagues complimented me on my appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The news had been given by the Emperor himself, in a visit of compliments which he had come to pay, in the middle of the day, to the English ambassador. Fortunately for me, this was not the case. Not possessing the necessary qualities to fulfill such functions, especially in the serious circumstances in which we found ourselves, I would have refused this offer without hesitation, if it had been made to me. This position belonged almost by right to a man as eminent for his moral qualities as for his talents, as well known in the political world as in the literary world, and already famous for his previous studies on politics and history, the one of the most distinguished, certainly, if not the most distinguished, of all conservatives: I named the Duke de Broglie. And as he was the rapporteur of the draft constitutional laws over which the battle against Mr. Thiers was fought, and as he had directed the entire campaign, it was he again who became the president of the Council of Ministers. On my way home afterwards At dinner, I found a dispatch from several of my children which gave me the explanation of the imperial remarks: "Tranquility in Paris," they wrote to me, "people are talking about you; embarrassed to give advice."

A few moments later, another telegram brought me the composition, at least in part, of the new cabinet: "Broglie,

foreign affairs; Magne, finance; Ernoul, justice; La Bouillerie, trade; Beulé, likely inside. Perfect tranquility.”

The government crisis had, in fact, passed and was resolved in the midst of a calm which it is important to note; but we were not at the end of our troubles. The rest of this story will show this only too abundantly. As for me, eighteen months of collaboration on the most important and delicate questions with Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat, whose skill and confidence, at least relative, I had time to appreciate, which they inspired abroad, eighteen months of intimate, excellent relations, must have inspired me with sincere regrets for their retirement.

So, I attached great importance to not letting our relations end without expressing these regrets and my gratitude for the past. Here first is the letter that I wrote to Mr. Thiers:

Berlin, May 30, 1873.

Dear Mr. Thiers,

I do not want you to think that your former ambassador did not have feelings of affection for you and respect than when you were in power. Since the 25th, I have been looking for an opportunity to send you my letter, and I have not found it yet. Furthermore, if someone has the inclination somewhere to open my letter, I very willingly agree to read all my regrets about your resignation and the memories that I keep of your kindness, of your benevolence towards me.

I'm not talking to you about the disagreements between you and the conservatives. You know with what sorrow I have always considered them, foreseeing that, despite their lack of foundation, they would ultimately bring about what I have never ceased to consider, and what I still consider to be a great misfortune, that is - to say the separation of men who

equally love their country and are made to understand each other, esteem each other and walk in harmony in these critical times.

You thought it necessary to withdraw at the same time as your ministers; was it therefore necessary? But, I know, this would take us very far and I hope, when I go to Paris, to be able to come and talk to you about all these things.

Allow me only to tell you that, if a few journalists forget their own dignity to the point of using shameful language towards you, it is impossible to suppose that the immense majority in France, even of those who disapproved of your line of conduct for internal affairs, does not formally condemn these indignities. It is impossible to forget the great services that you have rendered to our country, to forget the skill and courage with which you contributed, in such a strong part, to raising our country and giving it abroad the consideration to which he could claim.

For me, I consider it a duty to thank you again for having associated me with your work. You have given me, in spite of myself, so to speak, an honor that I had not dared to aspire to, but which will also be that of my children and my name. You have rewarded me well beyond my merits, which I will not forget either. Finally, dear Mr. Thiers, allow me to hope that if I no longer have the honor of serving under your orders, you will be kind enough to preserve the memory of our relations.

There are some, it seems to me, who survive all the dissensions of politics; ours, as far as I am concerned at least, will be of this number.

I am assured that you are leaving for Italy; In every way, you are right. I hope you will be a little less cold there than we were in Berlin.

Will you kindly offer my respectful homage to Madame Thiers and Mademoiselle Dosne, and accept for yourself, dear Monsieur Thiers, the assurance of my feelings of high and affectionate consideration?"

I received from Mr. Thiers the following response:

Paris, June 2, 1873.

My dear Monsieur de Gontaut, "I was very touched by the cordial letter you sent me, and if I needed to be consoled (which is not, I assure you), the esteem of honest people like you would be enough to make me forget all the indignities of parties. Besides, I receive thousands of letters, addresses, demonstrations of all kinds, and I hardly dare show myself in the streets because I am surrounded, applauded by the crowd; but I don't need all this popularity. I need my conscience first, which I have completely, and the approval of the good judges who come to me from all the offices.

Pitiless for disorder, impartial, benevolent, but independent between all parties, governing for the good of the thing alone, that is what I wanted to be and what I believe to have been. Any other conduct is not that of a statesman and will lead to a series of reactions which will end in empire. This is what is certain and what I will prove to you when we have these good conversations, in which we tell each other everything with this friendly frankness which allows us to be true without being hurtful. The right, for lack of light, is preparing an ironic deception.

Make sure that there is an element of cunning in what is being prepared, which we do not penetrate from afar because we are far away, and moreover because we are deceived about false exteriors. But another time. For the present, I thank you for your good and loyal cooperation, and

since you are interested in me, know that I feel an immense relief, an intimate joy to return to my tastes, to my books, to my fine studies, and to the book with which I want to end my life. "While I was directing so many diverse things, I said to myself at every moment: But what is all this, compared to the sublime truths which I was busy penetrating and which I will die, if I continue, without having penetrated thoroughly? The great Descartes, after having waged war and dabbled in politics, abandoned all that, saying: I have known the human comedy, the truth is better; and he shut himself up in Holland for life. I touched on the human comedy, not out of curiosity like him, but out of duty, and I return to the truth, which is only better when duty no longer holds you back from the human comedy, which, for me, was not comedy, but human tragedy. " All yours. "P.-S. — I am not going to move away, because I want to remain at my post, silent, inactive, but under arms against slander. At most I will spend a week in Rome, for work that I am having carried out for my collections."

I addressed the following letter to Mr. de Rémusat: Berlin, June 1, 1873. "Dear Mr. de Rémusat, "You know me well enough, I hope, to know with certainty that, if I do not, I haven't written since the events of May 24, it's just the worries and the work which they gave me absolutely prevented me from finding the necessary time to do it.

Whatever the causes which made you decide to leave the ministry, you know on how many points we were close and all the bonds of attachment, esteem and recognition which united me to you.

It is under your direction, and because of the guarantees that I found in you, that I accepted the delicate mission of representing my country in Berlin. You were kind enough to facilitate my task as much as it depended on you; I liked to rely on your wisdom and your business experience,

and I will certainly never forget the benevolent disinterestedness with which you and Mr. Thiers gave me the opportunity to sign a treaty intended to alleviate the ills with which our country was burdened.

How happy I would have been if domestic policy had found us in agreement as much as foreign policy! I would be very unfair and very ungrateful at least if I did not remember the freedom with which you have always allowed me to expose my doubts and my scruples to you. As for our country, I have a good enough opinion of it, despite the dissidences, despite the injustices of the parties in times of crisis, to believe that it will not forget the services that you have rendered to it vis-à-vis from abroad.

I do not know, however, whether I should not compliment you on having regained the rest that you had so voluntarily abdicated, and without anyone being able to accuse you of a feeling foreign to the most delicate man.

“Please, dear Mr. de Rémusat, accept the most sincere assurances of my highest and affectionate consideration.”

M. de Rémusat replied to me

Paris, June 14, 1873.

Dear Mr. de Gontaut,

You wrote me a kind letter, in which I rediscovered the feelings of benevolence that you have always shown me, and I am touched more than ever. I only regret, from the position I left, the precious relationships it allowed me to form, and among which those I had the pleasure of maintaining with you are in the first place. The cases we settled together are the best memory the last twenty months have left me.

I dare to hope, my dear sir, that you will not completely forget me in my retirement, and I will be happy to seize all the opportunities that will bring me closer to you.

Please accept the expression of my highest and affectionate consideration.

CHAPTER X

NOTIFICATION TO GERMANY OF THE ELECTION OF MARSHAL MAC-MAHON

Mr. de Gontaut is officially informed of the election of Marshal Mac-Mahon. — Circular from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to diplomatic agents. — Impressions produced abroad by the fall of Mr. Thiers. — What Prince Bismarck and the Emperor of Germany think about it. — How will the election of Marshal MacMahon be notified to the German government? — Conversation between M. de Gontaut and Prince Bismarck; he wanted new letters of credence for the ambassadors of France and Germany. — Instructions from M. le duc de Broglie to M. de Gontaut. — New conference with Prince Bismarck; he threatens to suspend diplomatic relations. — Dispatch by the French government of new letters of credence. — Indisposition of the Emperor and delivery of letters to Prince Bismarck. — Audience granted by the Emperor to M. de Gontaut; conversation about Mr. Thiers.

The first duty of the new government was to inform me officially of the acceptance of the resignation of Mr. Thiers and the election of Mr. Marshal Mac-Mahon in his place, and to invite me to notify this double act of national sovereignty to the German government. The dispatch written to this effect by the

new President of the Council, Mr. the Duke of Broglie, was in these terms:

Monsieur Viscount,

The Assembly depositary of national sovereignty received, in its session the 24th of this month, the resignation of Mr. Thiers and entrusted the office and dignity of President of the Republic to Mr. Marshal Mac-Mahon, Duke of Magenta. I hasten to notify you of this solemn act and invite you to bring it to the attention of the government where you reside. Penetrated by the desire to see good relations develop between France and foreign powers, the government is determined, as it proclaimed, to maintain internal peace and the principles on which society is based.

I ask you to express, on behalf of the French Republic, the assurance of the wishes expressed by its government for the strengthening of good relations between France and Germany, and its firm intention to contribute with all its efforts to the consolidation of general peace.”

This language was maintained and developed first in the Marshal's message to the Assembly, then in a circular addressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to diplomatic agents. I will quote the main passages from this last document.

The dispute which arose between the majority of the National Assembly and Mr. Thiers did not address any point relating to foreign policy. You may remember that, during the course of the two years which have just passed, the conduct adopted by Mr. Thiers to re-establish our relations with foreign powers, after the disasters of 1870, has not been the subject of any no debate in the Assembly. Numerous votes, on the contrary, have approved the efforts that this illustrious man has successfully made to erase the trace of our misfortunes

and restore full national independence to France... You therefore have nothing to change in the instructions that you received from the last government... You must remain faithful to the line that was drawn for you.

It is only on domestic policy that the President and the Assembly entered into disagreement. The majority of the Assembly thought that energetic resistance must be opposed to the progress of the revolutionary spirit, attested by the latest electoral results, and we did not find that the cabinet formed by the President, following these elections, presented the guarantees that it desired from this essentially conservative point of view. An agenda which expressed this thought was adopted and, the ministers having resigned, the President did not believe he could change his course of action and followed them in their retirement.

The new government, conforming to its origins, will therefore follow a resolutely conservative policy, that is to say peaceful on the outside and moderate on the inside. Opposing inflexible severity to all attempts that the revolutionary party would make to extend its influence by illegal means, it will not itself escape the strictest legality. No reaction is planned and will not be attempted against existing institutions. The constitutional laws, presented by our predecessors, remain subject to the judgment of the Assembly, which will decide alone, when it deems it appropriate, the supreme question of the form of government.

“By thus explaining, according to the reality of the facts, the meaning of this important event, you will not fail to point out that the question debated in the National Assembly concerned not only the rest of France, but that of all nations. It is not only in France that the revolutionary spirit reigns and conspires against public peace and against the very foundations of social order. No nation in Europe is exempt

from this evil, and all have an equal interest in seeing it suppressed. The situation of France and the powerful action it exerts on Europe and the world would make the triumph of the revolutionary party in our homeland more serious than anywhere else, and the cause of French society is that of civilization entirely. whole, etc., etc.”

Nothing more precise, nothing more reassuring in every respect than this language. Under the presidency of Mr. Marshal de Mac-Mahon, as under the presidency of Mr. Thiers, the existing institutions remained in force. Under both, the Assembly was sovereign and would decide at the appropriate time the question of the form of government; Mr. Thiers had never contested his right to do so. The direction of foreign policy remained the same. Only one change was announced: it concerned domestic policy: the uncontested and incontestable progress of the revolutionary spirit would encounter, from a purely conservative cabinet, energetic and more effective resistance than in the past. The whole of Europe, also afflicted by the same evil, was bound to benefit from this policy. These declarations were made to gain the satisfaction and to deserve the confidence of all foreign powers. It was therefore reasonable to believe that the recognition of the new government would not encounter any difficulty. England first, then Turkey, immediately entered into relations with him. Russia and Austria-Hungary were very willing to do the same. Germany alone raised objections. Annoyed by a change of policy which could strengthen order in France, raise its power and one day pave the way for the monarchy, she prepared to make us pay dearly for a development whose result would, in her own eyes, be diminish the chances of the republic, the regime on which Prince Bismarck counted to keep France divided and weakened. Did

he not, in fact, write to the Count of Arnim: "I am not responsible for making France happy"?

The first impressions in Berlin, upon receiving the news of the vote of May 24, were in accordance with the feeling of hostility which must have animated the Chancellor. First amazement, then demonstrations of distrust against future actions of the new President, who was immediately described as a marshal of revenge, contrasting him with the wisdom of Mr. Thiers, resumption of the usual theme of the decadence of our country, announcement of aggression, imminent on the part of France, this last noise, in particular, strongly encouraged by the national liberal party, which wanted to be forgiven for the definitive abandonment by the Reichstag of the right to set the military contingent annually, such were the impressions that I encountered and that I had to fight. They were not, moreover, shared by most members of the diplomatic corps; they were even foreign to more than one German. One of my most prominent colleagues, the usually reserved and even taciturn Austrian ambassador, was remarkably eager to congratulate me on the defeat of the radicals, and he went so far as to tell another to my colleagues, who repeated it to me, that his court and that of Petersburg had felt unalloyed satisfaction with the evolution of our policy in the conservative direction. Russia and Austria, however, despite their willingness to be content, like England, with a simple notification - which Prince Bismarck later admitted to me - resolved, probably by virtue of the conventions passed in Berlin during of the meeting of the three Emperors, to consult, on the subject of recognition, with Germany, much less inclined than them to welcome favorably the arrival to power of Marshal Mac-Mahon and a conservative cabinet.

The very evening of the day the event became known in Berlin, I found Mr. de Balan and Mr. Delbriick calm about our peaceful arrangements, in no way worried about the recovery of the last billion of the compensation, almost entirely assured. by the clever combinations of Mr. Thiers. Two days later, I found Mr. de Balan entrenched in his usual silence. Two more days later, when I went to bring him the official notification intended for the Chancellor, as I him expressed my regrets and my astonishment at the acerbic tone of the German press, at the prejudices it expressed regarding the probable direction that the French government would give to religious questions, he did not hide from me that he shared these concerns and he made me this singular remark, namely that the French newspapers most admiring of the Marshal and his ministers were those which attacked every day, with the most violence, the policy adopted by Prince Bismarck to resist the ultramontane schemes. Then he went from there to justify the necessity of the Prussian laws of May 15, on the relationship between Church and State! This was to move away somewhat from the subject of our conversation; but the poor Secretary of State let me guess under this language the concerns that the resistance of the German bishops, the already powerful organization of the Center Party and the religious struggles begun in his own country inspired in him.

The laws of May 1873 were the continuation of the struggle undertaken against the Catholic Church. The first act was the suppression, in 1871, of the Catholic affairs section of the Prussian Ministry of Religious Affairs. Next came the School Inspection Act, passed in 1872 by both Prussian Chambers. From the Reichstag and the Federal Council, the Chancellor also obtained two hostile measures: the application of a penalty to priests accused of having attacked state

institutions from the pulpit, and the expulsion of foreign Jesuits, with the defense of "any activity of their order" to the German Jesuits and to the religious or religious of the orders considered "affiliated" to the Jesuits. The May laws, four in number, were presented by the Minister of Religion, Doctor Falk, on January 9, 1873, to the Prussian Chamber of Deputies. Voted by it in March, they were discussed during April in the House of Lords, which made some slight modifications. Definitively accepted with these alterations, on May 9, by the Chamber of Deputies, they were signed by the King, then promulgated on May 15. The first concerned the preparatory instruction and nomination of candidates for ecclesiastical functions. It required that they had studied and passed examinations at a state university. Their appointment had to be notified by the ecclesiastical superiors to the president of the province which could, within thirty days, oppose it...

The other laws restricted the disciplinary power of the bishops, established the court royal ecclesiastical affairs, which received appeals from the sentences pronounced by them and could, on the proposal of the civil authority, dismiss a member of the clergy accused of having contravened the laws of the State, etc., etc.

The Prussian bishops met in conference at Fulda, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Cologne, from April 29 to May 2, and drew up a circular to the clergy and faithful in which they advised resistance to laws "which were in contradiction, on essential points, with the constitution that God had given to the Church and with its freedom."

The members of the Catholic party, that is to say of the center, who already numbered around 60 in the

Reischtag elected in 1871, would exceed the figure of 90 in the next elections of January 1874, out of a total of 397 deputies.

Perhaps he also wanted to give me proof of the feelings which increasingly linked his government to Italy, whose representative in Berlin, the Count de Launay, had already made me understand that the name of the Duke de Broglie had a very mediocre sense of sympathy for the politics of the Quirinal.

As for the Chancellor, information which I have every reason to believe to be absolutely certain, relating to the language which he pleased to use on France, confirmed the opinion which I indicated above. Prince Bismarck felt deep regrets about M. Thiers. He had faith in himself; it was with him personally that he had dealt, and he considered his retention in power as the most effective guarantee of postponing all thoughts of revenge. It was, in part, out of consideration for him that the convention of March 15 contained more than one clause advantageous to France. The Chancellor, moreover, had no concerns about the payments; but he did not profess great confidence in the establishment of a conservative republic in France. The new government, according to him, would be like the necessary transition towards another regime more stable, perhaps towards a monarchy which would awaken all the warlike instincts of our country, and France, said the prince, is endowed with a marvelous elasticity. He gave as an example the prompt organization of the Army of the Loire, in September and October 1870, and the ease with which we bore the weight of the financial burdens which had been imposed on us.

And the Emperor William, you might ask? What reception did he give to the events of May 24? — Very

favorable to Mr. Thiers, from the point of view of conventions with France, the Emperor feared the influence that the revolutionaries could exercise over him and the exploitation that they had already made of his legitimate popularity. I have reported more than once the value he attached to the understanding between Mr. Thiers and the conservatives of the Assembly, and I had very serious reasons to believe that the agreement finally reached between him and the commission of the Thirty had been one of the causes which had determined the Emperor to depart from the rigor of the conditions originally fixed for the evacuation of the territory and the maintenance of the occupying troops. It will perhaps be remembered that I never allowed Mr. Thiers and Mr. de Rémusat to be unaware of these provisions. Later, at the end of April and the beginning of May, rather lively discussions in the Assembly had caused apprehensions to resurface. The Provincial Correspondence had become its organ during the Emperor's stay in Saint Petersburg, in terms whose vivacity I have characterized above. I thought I knew that in the regions I am talking about, there was a strong wish that Mr. Thiers put himself at the head of the resistance to the progress of radical doctrines, in agreement with the conservatives of the Assembly. In the absence of this solution, the most desired of all, the Emperor at least congratulated himself on the success achieved by the conservative element of the Assembly. He did not hide, moreover, the sympathy he felt for the loyalty of Marshal MacMahon.

I took advantage of these good dispositions of the Emperor, by chatting one day with one of his friends, to make some criticisms of the unkind tone of the press and the harm it was doing to us and, thus, to all those in Europe who represented conservative opinion. My interlocutor was entirely of my

opinion; but it would have been necessary to agree on this subject with Prince Bismarck.

To summarize all these observations, I wrote to the Duke de Broglie: "Mr. Thiers is missed. As a whole, German statesmen are sympathetic to conservative ministers because they keep radicalism in check; but they fear on their part a policy favorable to the interests of Catholicism, in opposition to that which Germany has adopted since it declared war on the Church; finally and above all, they are pursued by this thought that we could recover too quickly, in their opinion, from our disasters, to regain the rank and the influence that our improvidence and our divisions have caused us to lose."

From all this, one cannot fail to conclude with me that our task in Berlin would be more arduous and would present more difficulties in the future than in the past. I believe I can assure you that the first proof of what I am putting forward was given to me in the matter of the recognition of the new President of the Republic.

On May 29, as I have already said, I went myself to bring to Mr. de Balan a letter that I wrote to the Chancellor to notify him of the resignation of Mr. Thiers and the choice made by the National Assembly of Mr. Marshal Mac-Mahon to succeed him. Here is the dispatch that I sent to the Duke de Broglie to report to him on this visit: "When I gave this letter to Mr. de Balan, he seemed to believe that the formality of the presentation of the letters of credence would be supererogatory, and that when the Emperor would have become aware session of my notification to the Chancellor, Mr. d'Arnim could be ordered to resume relations with our Minister of Foreign Affairs. He immediately conferred with Prince Bismarck. The latter, on the contrary, is inclined to

believe that new letters of credence would present advantages from the point of view of our reciprocal relations.

I pointed out to him that the National Assembly was, among us, the sovereign which delegated executive power, and that, as long as it continued to exist, it could be maintained that the agents of the French government at foreign courts would not need to be re-accredited.

I have to see Prince Bismarck this evening or tomorrow. He must have an interview with the King and I will let you know the opinion we reached.

Count Karolyi has also just told me that they were also prepared, in Vienna, to resume relations, as soon as the notification was made, and he asked me some questions on the form of this notification.

Mr. de Balan having let me see some concern with regard to the directions of our policy in religious affairs, based on the private feelings of the Marshal and the members of his government, I did not fail to reassure him and to repeat to him that our foreign policy would be the same as that of the previous government.

"I believe that these concerns must be taken seriously at this time, and that in everything relating to Rithahe we cannot be too careful.

It also seemed to me that the language of certain people in Prince Bismarck's entourage denoted the apprehensions which recur at each event giving Germany reason to fear that France would recover its forces and its influence."

On the evening of the same day, that is to say May 29, I went by to see the Chancellor. He made me aware, in a rather friendly tone, very calmly in any case, of his objections to the method of notification which I had believed to be the

most natural from all points of view. Here is briefly its language:

On our part, accepting that France establishes a new depositary of executive power, without asking its representative for new letters of credence, is to say that we recognize the republic as a *definitive* regime. This consequence accepted, it is very true that we would not have to make a formal act of recognition each time towards the new elected president; but so far, you say at Versailles that the order of things in France is provisional; in this case, it would be necessary for the president established by the Assembly to notify our sovereign of his entry into power. I believe that my observation is based on good reasons in European public law and that it is as useful for you as for us; but it is up to you alone to decide the question.

As for Germany, I can tell you, it very willingly recognizes the advent of Marshal MacMahon to the presidency. We welcome him with great satisfaction, although for the moment, he added with a smile, we must take your word for it when you come to speak to me on his behalf. Your Sovereign Assembly could later designate a president who would inspire us with less confidence than the Marshal, and it would be unfortunate for the cabinets to have created a precedent which would bind them. You will no doubt need to refer it to Versailles; but I will be obliged to you to give me a very prompt solution. Austria and Russia want to agree with us on this question of diplomatic form and etiquette. Initially, the cabinets of Vienna and Saint Petersburg had shown themselves willing to be content with a simple notification. I showed them the disadvantages from the point of view of the precedents. We wouldn't like to delay no longer in letting them know our feelings, after you have decided on your resolutions, according to your own convenience."

In the course of the interview, moreover, he said to me several flattering words for the Marshal, without anything which could make me suppose that he had taken umbrage at the modifications which had taken place in our government; he was far too clever for that!

I replied to Prince Bismarck what I had already answered to Mr. de Balan: In France, currently, the Assembly is the only sovereign, which has successively delegated executive power to Mr. Thiers first, to Marshal de Mac-Mahon then; but the sovereign has not disappeared. Between my doctrine and that which Prince Bismarck supported, claiming to base it on the true principles of international law, I persist in believing that mine was the true one. The Chancellor's distinction between the definitive and the provisional was subtle, and it had, I believe, in his mind, only one goal, that of giving a doctrinal appearance to the acceptance or refusal of recognition of a given president, let's say better, of such head of the executive power that the Assembly would choose and who would bring umbrage to Germany.

In any case, he did not hide the practical side of his pretensions. He told me: "What I am asking is as useful to you as it is to us; If Gambetta, for example, by any means, managed to get himself named president, you, conservative, would find a great advantage in our refusal to recognize him! " In saying this, I have no doubt that his thoughts were, at least, as much on the Count of Chambord as on Mr. Gambetta. 'But I was no more disposed to follow him on this ground than on that of the distinction between the definitive and the provisional. I wondered, moreover, whether leaving it up to the powers to decide for themselves whether we were or were not under a provisional regime, this would not give them an indirect right to interfere in our internal affairs.

Whatever the case, my opinion was not to bring this matter into the realm of principles, and I was inclined to think that, in the present situation of France, it would be better to accede to the wishes of the Chancellor. This is what I sent to the Duke de Broglie on the morning of May 30, reminding him at the same time that my letters of credence came from Mr. Thiers, who was no longer president. I must add that several of my colleagues were inclined to believe that the point of view taken by Prince Bismarck in our conference denoted favorable feelings towards the person of Marshal MacMahon and the new administration. It was not impossible, and I thought it necessary to make this opinion known to Versailles. I too was tempted for a moment to share it; but, reflecting since then on the malevolence that the Chancellor has continued to show towards us since May 24, I believe that we were wrong to suppose him to have the good feeling in question. By transmitting to me an opinion that they themselves, perhaps, did not believe to be very well founded, were my colleagues not intending to lead us to make a concession which would remove any possibility of a dissent likely to cause concern Europe?

The French Government was of the opinion that new letters of credence were not necessary, and the reason on which it relied was that which I had maintained. It seemed impossible to him, moreover, that the new President would notify his accession in the same manner as the sovereigns. He was in a great hurry, moreover, to resolve this question and regarded as an important thing the entry, without delay, of the ambassadors with the new government. But, after receiving my dispatch of the 30th in the morning, the Duke de Broglie telegraphed the same day that he was going to send me new instructions. These reached me at eight o'clock in the evening; here is its content:

“We persist in considering as conclusive the reasons which lead us to consider the sending of new letters of credence as useless, and if we insist on our way of seeing, it is because the question is already engaged in a meaning consistent with our opinion by the steps of England and Turkey, who continued their previous relations with the French government. We would therefore see some disadvantages in asking the German government for formal recognition, which other powers have not considered necessary. See without delay, if possible, Prince Bismarck and present these considerations to him, avoiding, however, returning to the discussion initiated in the first conference, on the provisional or definitive character that should be attributed to the regime established by the National Assembly. Make it clear that this is a purely formal question, of little importance in itself; to highlight, on the contrary, all the importance that we attach to it receiving an immediate solution, because any postponement in the establishment of relations between the German government and the new head of the executive power would not fail to be interpreted by the public in a way that would respond neither to the feelings of the Berlin cabinet nor to ours. In the event that Prince Bismarck persists in his view, despite our observations, cease all resistance and admit, without further discussion, the sending of new letters of credence, which would allow the minister to enter into relations from then on, at least unofficially and to ensure the continuation of affairs, with the German ambassador.”

My mission therefore consisted of still trying to make our opinion prevail, and to give in if the Chancellor have not given up. But it was necessary, in the latter case, to safeguard our dignity, and this was made quite difficult by the turn given to the discussion by the bitter Chancellor. We will judge this by

the story of the conference that I had on the evening of the 30th with him.

I reminded him of the reasons which made us consider the presentation of new credentials superfluous. I presented to him again, developing them further, the arguments that I had already put forward, and he took up his own, also giving them more scope. He also returned to the distinction between the definitive and the provisional, and the advantage there was for conservatives in adhering to his doctrine. I did not follow him on this last ground; I forced him to leave it, extricating myself with I don't know what joke, not wanting, in any way, to allow him to take advantage of my personal predilections or those of the members of the new cabinet for this or that form of government. I told him, furthermore, that we did not attach extreme importance to the question in itself, and that we would have conceded what he was asking of us if the situation were complete, but that the ambassadors of England and of Turkey had continued their previous relations with the French government, considering as sufficient the notifications that M. le Comte d'Harcourt and M. le Comte de Vogüé had been responsible for transmitting to the London cabinet and to the Porte.

In the eyes of the Chancellor, the two ambassadors I appointed to him had been wrong. They had made a mistake from the point of view of international law and from the point of view of the European order, this for the reason that he had already given me, namely that, looking at the presidency of the Marshal of Mac-Mahon as the continuation of the republican fact and by not motivating new letters of credence, it would follow that at the next choice of the Assembly wheat which could relate to men such as MM. Ranc or Gambetta, the powers would be bound by a previous act of recognition and that they would be obliged to receive an envoy from the

president of the radical republic, elected according to the forms of strict legality, or to expressly sever their diplomatic relations, which was a very serious end. Basically, this argument was the great hobby horse of Prince Bismarck, and it was all the less likely to convince me that the Chancellor had just admitted that he reserved not to recognize a president of the French republic, even "elected according to the forms of strict legality". This would mean consequently influencing the votes of the French Assembly and forcing it, as long as our country was weak, to only choose as president a man agreeable abroad.

In my response to the Chancellor, I nevertheless refrained from exposing this consequence of his pretensions to him, wanting as much as possible to avoid, as the Duke de Broglie had very judiciously recommended to me, bringing the discussion to the level of principles and of our internal affairs.

The conversation could no longer continue; perhaps it had lasted too long. Prince Bismarck had told me, on several occasions, that he recognized our right to choose the form of our notification. He no longer insisted and said to me in a sullen tone: "*Salvavi animam meam!*" I believe I have given you salutary advice; but let it be according to your will." The conversation fell on both sides; we had exhausted all arguments, he showing himself annoyed by my reasoning, while I simply let him see a preference for the method of notification that we had originally chosen. After a few moments of silence, the Chancellor said with a very serious face: The requests of Count of Arnim, motivated by the state of his health; I grant him that." Not wanting to appear to immediately realize the significance of this statement, I asked him about the ambassador's fiancée. "I do not want to delay his departure from Paris," continued the prince. His presence is no longer necessary, since he no longer has to submit credentials."

The threat was transparent; it was obviously a suspension of diplomatic relations between our two countries. Despite the inner revolt that such an unexpected — dare I add — brutal process aroused in me? — I judged the time had come to follow through with my instructions. I let the conversation wander to other subjects for a few moments, then I quietly asked him this question: "Prince, we are separated by a question of form. Do you find it of great importance from the point of view of our relations? "Yes," he replied in a very clear accent. — For me, I continued, there is only one important thing, and that is the continuation of our relations in their regular form, to prevent unfortunate comments from public opinion. The difficulty of letters of credence seems to me purely formal; I cut it, taking it upon myself." He seemed satisfied. The affair, indeed, was arranged according to his wishes.

"Now that we are in agreement," I said to him, "you will see no difficulty, I suppose, in authorizing the Count of Arnim to enter into official relations with the Duke of Broglie."

"None," replied the Chancellor; but I must first inform Russia of what has been decided between us. New delay of a questionable opportunity.

In the report that I addressed to the minister, on leaving the chancellery, I asked him to send me without delay letters of credence, in the form in which M. Thiers had had the first ones drawn up. I added an observation - probably useless after the account of this conversation - on the lack of good will which it denoted, on the part of the Chancellor, for the modifications which had taken place in our government. I said, however, that in order to judge him correctly, it was necessary to take into account his temperament which, in discussions, generally leads him to extreme means, etc. I must, in truth,

add that several times, in our two interviews, he said flattering words to me about the Marshal.

My dispatch was dated May 31. The next day, the minister, a little too eager, according to me, to see this incident end, which gave him agitation, telegraphed me: "Have you explained in detail what is desired in Berlin for the resumption of relations, so that we do not have new difficulties. In what form must the new President notify his accession? Once the matter has been decided, avoid any controversy even with your colleagues. The question is formal, and if the demand testifies to a distrust of the state of the country with which we must be distressed, it has nothing personal against Marshal de Mac-Mahon, whose situation is growing in the contrary, since it is assimilated to sovereigns.

The Count of Arnim has not yet responded to my notification, nor given any sign of life. This reservation cannot be explained, now that we agree on everything. The inconvenience is great for current affairs, and it is important to put an end to it at all costs. Insist on this.

The German government was not, it is true, in any great hurry to give its agents the instructions which resulted from the understanding reached between it and us; but the main thing was that the incident was over, and the Duke de Broglie seemed to me to be slightly exaggerating the inconveniences of the delay in question. I sent one of the embassy secretaries, Mr. Debaius, to one of the Chancellor's secretaries, in order to agree with him on the form to be given to the agreed notification. Prince Bismarck told me that he left it to the French government to decide how it would accredit its representative to the German court, either by issuing him new letters of credence, or by confirming those that M. Thiers had given it to me. He also considered necessary a letter from the Marshal to the Emperor. The next day, Count Hatzfeldt, one of

the reporting advisors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, confirmed to Mr. Debains the response of the day before by proposing, in his name, it is true, a slight simplification: "In all cases," wrote the Count Hatzfeldt, Prince Bismarck deems necessary a letter from Marshal MacMahon to the Emperor. I believe, for my part, that this letter can at the same time accredit Mr. de Gontaut to our court." The letter, dated June 2, added: "Mr. d'Arnim was authorized to enter into unofficial relations with the government of Mr. Marshal de MacMahon, while waiting for the question of letters of credence to be settled."

I immediately transmitted these various responses to Versailles. At eleven o'clock in the evening, the same day, June 2, I received a telegram from the Duke de Broglie in these terms: "A courier leaving tomorrow morning will bring you the notification of the Marshal and your new letters of credence. Make arrangements to return it immediately. The Count of Arnim has just informed me that he is authorized to enter into unofficial relations with me and that he will give me his new letters of credence as soon as you have completed this formality."

"Prince Orloff was received today by the President of the Republic."

The next day, the 3rd, Mr. Debains went to see, on my behalf, Mr. de Balan to announce to him the sending of my new letters of credence and the letter of Mr. Marshal MacMahon to the Emperor, and ask him to obtain for me without delay an audience with His Majesty. Two hours later, Mr. de Balan returned his visit and instructed him to tell me on behalf of Prince Bismarck: "We already consider Mr. Viscount de Gontaut-Biron as a perfectly regular ambassador. The prince recently telegraphed the Count of Arnim to go and see Marshal MacMahon. We are going to send him his letters, and

orders have already been given to have the response that HM Emperor William will send to the Marshal prepared without any delay. The solemnity of the notification will only enhance the mark of esteem that our sovereign intends to give to the head of your government. You perhaps know, he added, that HM the Emperor of Russia, with whom we have agreed on this question of diplomatic protocol, has ordered Prince Orloff to report to the Marshal? It is always an important matter to make a change such as that which you have introduced. This is not a normal, regular thing like a change of president in the United States Constitution; but we note, with great pleasure, that it was done in a perfectly conservative and very reassuring sense for Europe. Prince Bismarck thanks Mr. de Gontaut for having grasped, in a perfect spirit of conciliation, the meaning of the observations he addressed to him, and considers that the course adopted can only be favorable to good relations between the two countries. He has no doubt that the Emperor will be very eager to receive the French ambassador. But he is unwell and perhaps he will not be able to resolve the question of the audience this evening. If it were to be postponed for a day or two, because of the health of the Emperor, may M. de Gontaut consider himself a perfectly regular ambassador. We consider the incident of diplomatic procedure as absolutely empty."

In short, there was a certain good grace in these declarations of the Chancellor; they seemed intended to erase a little the harshness of his process.

On the morning of the 4th, I received from Versailles the sending of the announced documents, and I wrote to the Chancellor transmitting the copies to him:

Prince,

Mr. Marshal de Mac-Mahon, Duke of Magenta, to whom the National Assembly conferred the dignity of President of the French Republic by its vote of May 24, having kindly retained me in the functions of Ambassador of France to His Majesty the Emperor of Germany, I have the honor to address this - attached to Your Highness the figurative copy of the letters which confirm me in this capacity, at the same time as the letter addressed by the new head of the executive power to His Majesty the Emperor William.

Referring to the communications we exchanged yesterday, I come to ask you to take the orders of the Emperor and to let me know the day and hour when His Majesty will deign to receive me."

Here is the letter from the Marshal to the Emperor William:

Marshal de Mac-Mahon, Duke of Magenta, President of the French Republic, To His Majesty the Emperor William, King of Prussia,

The Assembly, depositary of national sovereignty, received, in its session of the 24th of this month, the resignation of Mr. Thiers, President of the Republic, and conferred on me in his replacement the same charge and dignity. It cannot doubt that I am studying to develop good relations between the two countries and to maintain, with internal and external peace, the major principles of order on which societies are based. I consider myself happy to have the opportunity to give these assurances to Your Majesty, and I like to hope for reciprocity of these feelings on your part.

Thereupon, I pray to God that he has you in his holy and worthy custody and I offer to Your Majesty the expression of my high consideration.

“Written at Versailles, May 31, 1873.”

Here, finally, is the copy of my new letters of credence

*The Marshal of Mac-Mahon, Duke of Magenta,
President of the French Republic, To His Majesty V Emperor
of Germany, King of Prussia,*

Desirous of leaving no interruption in the diplomatic relations between France and Germany, we have resolved to confirm Mr. Viscount de Gontaut-Biron, member of the National Assembly, Grand Cross of the Order of the Legion of Honor, Grand Cross of the Order of the Crown of Saxony, etc., etc., in the high functions of ambassador, which he fulfilled to Your Majesty. The qualities which distinguish this ambassador and his spirit of conciliation guarantee us the care he will take to neglect nothing. to be worthy of the trust that your Majesty has been kind enough to show him until now. We ask your Majesty to continue to give him full faith and belief, especially when he expresses, as we have instructed him to do, the assurances of our high esteem. With this, we pray to God to have you in his holy and worthy custody.

“Written at Versailles, June 1, 1873.”

I saw Prince Bismarck that same day, June 4. He told me that the Emperor, continuing to be unwell, would probably not be able to receive me for two or three days, but that His Majesty would very probably sign the letters of credence of the Count of Arnim the next day, that they would be sent to him immediately with orders to present them to the Marshal, even if the Emperor had not been able to receive me.

The next day, the 5th, the Duke of Broglie telegraphed me: The Count of Arnim came to see me this morning. Having missed me in Paris, he looked for me and even waited for me in Versailles. In truth, he made an effort, both in Versailles and

in Paris, to come and see me at my home, at my personal residence, and not at the ministry (!!). But he announced to me that, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow at the latest, he would hand over his credentials to the Marshal, and that official relations would be resumed; after which he proposes to take a leave of absence to go to the waters of Garlsbad.

“His language was very affectionate, and he denied all the rumors spread by the Prussian correspondent of the Times.

The Times was so hostile to the France on all occasions that, this time again probably, it was a matter of some gossip intended to sour relations between France and Germany. (G.-B.)

The incident can therefore be considered completely resolved, and I thank you for the part you took in this favorable outcome.”

In Berlin and Paris, the incident was therefore declared over, although the two ambassadors had not yet submitted their credentials.

The Emperor's health had caused the postponement of my audience. On June 6, M. de Balan came, in the name of Prince Bismarck, to inform me of the new delays that my reception might experience for the same reason. “Last night,” he told me, “the letters of credence intended for the Count of Arnim were signed and sent by a special courier.” To end the incident immediately (that is to say so that there would be no more question of it), the Chancellor asked me if I would like to entrust him with the letters of the Marshal. An audience would be granted to me in a few days, because the Emperor wanted to see me. In the meantime, a dispatch signed by the Chancellor, which would be sent to me to acknowledge receipt

of my letters, would now be the official recognition of my character as ambassador to H.M., the Emperor of Germany.

I had learned to be on guard against the Chancellor's demands. I thought for a few seconds, then I decided to subscribe to his wishes. I told M. de Balan that I would have liked to deliver these letters myself in private audience to the Emperor, but that I would not insist, having learned that His Majesty was quite unwell. I wanted, however, that she would deign to receive me before her departure for Vienna, scheduled for the 20th of this month, and I charged Mr. de Balan to be the interpreter of my desire, which he promised to do very expressly. I was able to understand from his words that Prince Bismarck was keen not to prolong this somewhat delicate situation. It seemed wise to me to consent to what was asked of me, without showing the slightest susceptibility, experience having taught me, moreover, that a certain good grace in the form could earn us easier dispositions on the bottom. I therefore handed over the Marshal's letters to Mr. de Balan, asking him in exchange for a few lines explaining the causes which had deprived me of the usual audience.

The day was not over when I received the following dispatch from the Chancellor. She gave me the satisfactions which we had agreed upon in the interview with M. de Balan; but, contrary to usage accepted until now, it was not written in French. It was the first time that I received a communication of this kind in German. Prince Bismarck was strictly within his rights; but anyone other than him would have chosen another occasion to inaugurate the exercise. Here is the translation of this letter;

Berlin, June 6, 1873.

I have the honor to announce to Your Excellency that I have presented to HM the Emperor and King, my august

master, the two letters that you were kind enough to have me hold, and by which Mr. Marshal Mac-Mahon notifies His Majesty of his appointment to the dignity of President of the Republic and the confirmation of your status as Ambassador of France in Berlin.

Your Excellency knows the health reasons which prevented His Majesty the Emperor from receiving you today. Her Majesty has therefore instructed me to let you know that, from now on, she considers your confirmation in your position as Ambassador of France to be accomplished, and that, as soon as her health allows it, she will make a pleasure to receive Your Excellency and to express to you the satisfaction she feels at knowing that you have continued in the high positions that you have held until now in Berlin.

“May Your Excellency please accept on this occasion the assurance of my highest consideration,”

A few days later, the Emperor invited me and my daughters to dinner at Babelsberg, where he had gone to complete his recovery, and there he gave me the agreed audience. I found him still tired, but as attentive as usual to all the incidents of political life and, in particular, to the latest events in France. By expressing to him my regrets at not having been able to give him my credentials myself and take advantage of this opportunity to renew to him in person all the loyal and sincere assurances contained in the Marshal's letter as well as in his declarations before the National Assembly, I had the honor to assure him that the guarantees of peace and faithful execution of France's commitments also remained intact under the new government than under the preceding one, and I expressed the conviction that the conservative sentiment which had provoked the formation of a new administration should inspire satisfaction and confidence in Europe.

The Emperor immediately replied that he had known Marshal de Mac-Mahon for a long time, that he had complete faith in his honor, in his loyalty, in his feelings of all kinds, and that he was very happy to see him in the situation he occupied.

There was also a lot of talk about the former President of the Republic.

"The King spoke to me about M. Thiers," I wrote to the Duke de Broglie on June 21. He expressed to me both his confidence in the skill and loyalty of Mr. Thiers towards Germany, and his fears about his political tendencies.

"Mr. Thiers went to sit on the left!" said the King. — I re-established the truth: "In the center left," I replied, "which is not the same thing." — That's true, in the center and left, said the King; but, he added, that was the danger for Mr. Thiers, the one that we always feared, was to see him lean towards the left. — Hey! My God, I replied to the King, this is, in fact, where the "crux of the question" was found. Mr. Thiers is certainly conservative; he aimed at the same goal as us; but he preferred another way to reach it; he believed that it was necessary to "lean to the left, in order to neutralize the opposition of this party. The majority made frequent concessions "in this regard; she often went where he wanted; but, "in the end, she believed that the interest of the country absolutely prohibited her from going further. It would be very unfair if we ignored the services rendered by Mr. Thiers for this. — Certainly, I understand this feeling wonderfully, but I find that we do not share it sufficiently in France and that we show with regard to Mr. Thiers a certain ingratitude."

It is a rather delicate subject to deal with, that of recognition and ingratitude towards Mr. Thiers, particularly for me who loves Mr. Thiers, who do him full justice for so many eminent services rendered to France.

"I believe," I replied to His Majesty, "that there are two things to be distinguished when we speak of Mr. Thiers: his foreign policy and his domestic policy. It is impossible for us not to applaud his wise leadership, full of reserve and loyalty, the maintenance he has given to our attitude towards foreign powers, to the skill and the fidelity with which he carried out all his commitments. There was unanimity in this regard on the part of the conservatives, and the new government declared, in the most expressive manner, that this policy would be its own. (And the King approved each of my words.) As to internal conduct, there was dissidence, "and dissidence going back to ancient times, between M. Thiers and the majority of the conservatives. M. Thiers believed it necessary, in order to govern, to rely almost equally on all parties. This is what people have said about him, accusing him of playing a seesaw game. 0 For a long time, this reproach was not very well founded, 0 because with a provisional order of things and with the composition of the parties in the Assembly, it was almost "impossible to rely exclusively on a single " of them. But this system could not last forever; "especially after the radical elections, the time to stop had come; it was necessary to decide one way or another. This is what the majority asked of "Mr Thiers. She tried to make him understand that "it was time to stop these radical tendencies, that the country, "in reality the vast majority conservative, would go haywire if its government continued to rely on the left just as much only on the right, and she did not ask Mr. Thiers to withdraw, far from it, but she demanded from him a policy which, by the choice of his agents as well as by the general management, was clearly and resolutely conservative. M. Thiers did not believe it necessary to follow "these opinions; he persisted. What could the majority do in the face of a danger that it considered very serious? "She finally put Mr. Thiers on notice to take a side; "Mr. Thiers

wanted to withdraw after the vote of censure against his ministry. In truth, there is no *ingratitude* there.”
“The King approved.”

CHAPTER XI

THE GOVERNMENT OF MARSHAL MAC-MAHON AND GERMANY

Letter from the Duke of Broglie to Mr. de Gontaut to ask him for an account of the reception given to the new government in Germany. — Response from M. de Gontaut. — Two currents of opinion: feeling of solidarity with the conservatives of France; fear of national recovery. — Presumed feeling of Prince Bismarck. — Need for a policy of prudent abstention. — Interview of M. de Gontaut with the Emperor of Germany; praise of Mr. Thiers; pilgrimages in France. — The new government is generally suspected abroad of clericalism. — Interview between M. de Gontaut and the Empress on the internal state of France. — The religious question in Germany. — Conversation of Prince Orloff with M. le Duc de Broglie; the dispositions of Prince Bismarck; worrying situation. — Conversation of M. de Gontaut with the Empress; the suspicions that France inspires; again the pilgrimages. — Visit of Victor-Emmanuel to Berlin; France and Italy.

We have seen above the impressions produced in Berlin at the first news of the change of president and ministers. I immediately entered into communication with my new boss, who was at the same time my friend, M. le Duc de Broglie. I reported to him at some length about the favorable and unfavorable symptoms that I gathered at Berlin regarding things and men, and, for his part, he explained to me what had

brought about the outcome of the struggle between Mr. Thiers and the conservatives, and the conduct that the new cabinet intended to follow; he was staunchly conservative and staunchly pacific.

Here is the letter that wrote to me from Versailles, on May 27, the Duke of Broglie;

Dear friend,

You now know everything that happened. You had left Paris recently. I avoided seeing you, because your official situation would have made conversation difficult for me, as it would have been painful for me. You take it for granted that there were no more fifteen days to lose.

The slope was disastrous, the abyss yawning, and the chariot rushed forward with the increasing speed that gravity gives, once it had received the first impulse. The operation was quite tough, but much less than expected, and the general feeling seems favorable to the new combination. Success will be assured if the conservatives know how to remain united to face the common enemy. Will they not know? not this union so desirable? I do not want to swear about it, I can only answer for my resolution; maintain the beam as long as I can at the expense of all my personal predilections.

You can judge how happy I am to find in the most difficult position an old friend like you, with whom I am united by all kinds of sympathy. I would have chosen for myself that I would not have treated myself so well as Mr. Thiers, after God, did. So let me shake your hand right now. And right away, too, let's talk about our sad and serious affairs.

May 24 is seen in the background and actually in Berlin? I am not talking about the more or less keen regrets that Mr. Thiers' retirement may leave behind, from a very personal point of view. I have no doubt that you ... How did the

event share it yourself, and those who have only had to deal with his foreign policy and who have been under the spell of his conversation can hardly have any other impression. Nor am I speaking of certain fears which the presence of a Marshal of France at the head of affairs may arouse. You do me the honor to think that I would not have been eight days at the ministry without everyone in Europe and in Berlin knowing that we are not crazy enough to dream of revenge, unfortunately impossible! (God knows for how long!), that all our commitments will be rigorously kept, that the policy, in a word, which is imposed on us by the most elementary common sense, will be followed and even proclaimed immediately.

But, really, how do we see a conservative reaction in France? Which of these two feelings prevails? That of the solidarity of all governments equally threatened by the revolutionary spirit? or the fear that this happy event, by rescuing France from a certain and imminent anarchy, would give it too much chance of recovering? In the benevolence shown to Mr. Thiers, was there not some Machiavellian calculation mixed in? Did we not think, without saying it, perhaps without admitting it to ourselves, that the power of an old man, dominated by bad advisors, only gave France a material rest of a few days, necessary for the payment of our debt, but which would be followed by new disasters from which we reserved ourselves to profit? In a word, will we see without displeasure France torn from the certainty of its ruin?

You will undoubtedly tell me that the feeling is mixed and varies according to the person; but unfortunately, there is barely one in Berlin, perhaps even in Europe, whose feeling counts, and it is this one especially that I am in trouble.

Do you have any way of unraveling his true thoughts and tell me what kindness it promises us or what inconvenience it reserves for us? Tell me what you can in this

regard. I know that it is difficult to disentangle impressions which are perhaps confused in the very person who feels them..."

I replied to the Duke de Broglie:

Berlin, May 31, 1873.

My dear friend,
cordiality, and the trust you show me. Certainly, you exaggerate...

Thank you for your letter if my merits; but you must count on my devotion to the precious and delicate interests entrusted to me, on my satisfaction in renewing my relations with you so intimately, and on my keen desire to assist you. You have tackled a great task. The most important question today is not the form of government: it is the union of all conservatives. You led them into battle with resolution, with great skill; you will know how to enjoy victory. God helping. To reap the benefits, prudence, moderation, a great spirit of conciliation and a lot of dedication are required. I did not need your statements to be certain that all these qualities were found in you. I applaud in advance with joy and tender interest in all the good you are capable of doing. You will find pitfalls almost everywhere, even in our inland waters. The exaggerations of our friends on the extreme right will not be one of the least difficult to avoid; but you will get through it happily, thanks to your good will, which we will support with all our power. I also hope that these gentlemen will understand the seriousness of the situation, which does not yet allow party pretensions to be put forward.

The Marshal's message and your circular to diplomats agents are very wise, very honest and can only produce good

impressions. This leads me to answer your question: how is the event of May 24 seen basically and in reality, in Berlin?

You can already sense my response, after the letter and the dispatches that I wrote to you these last days and this morning. The name of Marshal Mac-Mahon is very popular and the conservative sentiment which brought about the changes that have occurred is generally appreciated. However, there are certain mistrusts that we will only overcome with time and a lot of wisdom. By now you are aware of the notification incident, in which I was forced to give way.

This is the first *active* symptom of these mistrusts. I do not blame the Chancellor for having expressed an opinion contrary to yours on this question, although in truth, with good will towards us, he could have maintained his with less persistence, perhaps not even supporting her at all; but what seemed more serious to me was, after having seemed to give in several times, to have suddenly and very brutally declared to me that in the event that he accepted our way of seeing, he would take action against us his precautions and would begin by withdrawing his ambassador from Paris. Why this threatening process? Without doubt, Prince Bismarck had a pronounced taste for M. Thiers; no doubt, after having dealt with him for a long time, after having indulged, to a certain extent, in the charm of his spirit, after having appreciated the skill and loyalty with which Mr. Thiers fulfilled the commitments of the treaty, he very much wanted him to remain in power, he was keen to complete the negotiations begun with him; no doubt, he fears the development of radicalism; but his attachment to Mr. Thiers did not go so far as to want to make France pay for the wrong of no longer having him at its head; his hatred against the revolutionary spirit will not to the extent of wanting to compress it everywhere and at all costs.

“The truth, in my opinion, is very close to what you think: the division of the men of order suited him; he did not specifically want it to lead to the advent of radicalism; he hoped that the conservatives' dissensions would prevent France from recovering, at least from recovering too quickly.

The two feelings you speak of exist at the same time in Berlin: that of the solidarity of all governments equally threatened by the revolutionary spirit, and the fear of seeing France regain its former splendor. Which of the two wins? This is very difficult to estimate, and it depends on the men. We must not believe that the King's influence is not considerable. He is much loved and much counted; very often he struggles with the Chancellor, because he is, naturally and by principle, much more conservative than him; but most often, it must be admitted, it is the Chancellor who ends up winning. The King, I believe I can affirm, favorably welcomed the events of May 24; he is very particularly sympathetic to Mr. de Mac-Mahon, and all the conservatives in Berlin share the King's way of seeing. Most certainly, and on the other hand, he fears the awakening of France. But when he made up his mind with such difficulty at the conventions of June 29 and March 15, it was even more out of fear of the unleashing of the revolutionary spirit than out of fear of revenge. In short, with him, both feelings exist, but the first dominates the other.

It is the opposite proportion, so to speak, that we find in M. de Bismarck, and you are right to say that in the balance of European destinies no influence counts as much as that of the chancellor of the empire of Germany.

You judge very well, therefore, how important it is to take care of her. This is why I believed it was necessary, in my interview last night, to follow through on your instructions. Independently of the reasons that I give in my dispatch, should we not take this into account: If Germany had withdrawn its

ambassador at the very moment of the changes introduced into the government, what advantage would it not have gained against us, against the conservatives, and the left and all those who supported Mr. Thiers with their vote in the elections of May 24? I suffered cruelly from the humiliation that the Chancellor imposed on us; but we must, in the unfortunate situation into which we have been thrown, have the courage to undergo numerous sacrifices. I did not want to write, in my dispatch, some hurtful allusions that he made to me on the profound notions of public law that Mr. Thiers possessed and which would not have allowed him to propose the method of notification that the government current had adopted, on "the ignorance of Lord Lyons, the Slavic levity of Prince Gortchakoff, whom he had to warn", etc., etc. His usual irritability, it must be said, is very excited at this moment by two causes which are not without importance: by a memorandum from the German bishops, advising resistance to the latest religious laws,

This is the circular discussed in a previous note (p. 352).

and by rather lively discussions that he had to argue against the King and even against the Minister of the Interior, regarding the presentation to the Reichstag of a very liberal draft law on the press.

It was from this project that the press law of May 9, 1874, passed by the Reichstag on April 25 of the same year, emerged. It removed part of the restrictive obligations imposed until then, the special authorization to be obtained before publishing a newspaper, the stamp duty, the bond. She maintained the responsibility of the editor-in-chief. The prior

seizure of a form could be ordered by a simple police order. Press offenses were brought before the courts. After the discussion of this law, the Reichstag adopted a resolution inviting the Federal Council to introduce into the code of criminal procedure, which was in the process of being drafted, a provision which would submit press offenses to the jury.

I conclude, my dear friend, and to your question I answer: we saw with pleasure in Germany the halt put to the progress of radicalism by the advent of the new government; but we want France's convalescence to continue for a long time; we do not want his recovery. This is the feeling in particular of Prince Bismarck and his bold and at the same time ingenious spirit will not neglect the opportunities to prevent us from getting back up.

What have we to do in the face of this? You certainly see it better than me, and you have already explained it in your circular, as Marshal Mac-Mahon also said in his message: maintain the foreign policy adopted by Mr. Thiers. It is a policy of erasure or, better said, of abstention and moderation. We cannot, in my opinion, have any other at the moment. It will certainly cost our national pride, it will seem to fail our traditions; it is no less true that the faults of the Empire condemn us to this, particularly in what concerns Germany and Italy. It is on purpose that I join these two words. If the arrival of a Marshal of France in power gave some cause for concern and aroused fears of revenge, or at least made them exploited, the religious feelings of several members of the new administration gave rise to rumors of intervention in Italy and awakening of the clerical spirit. However well-founded these apprehensions may be, they still haunt many minds in Germany, and you are not unaware of all the advances made

by the latter country to Italy. We therefore cannot be too circumspect in this regard. I think you are not thinking of replacing Mr. Fournier.

Mr. Fournier was the ambassador to the Quirinal. He had had disagreements with M. de Bourgoing, the ambassador to the Vatican, on the subject of the visit that the staff of Orinoco, anchored in the waters of Civita- Vecchia, at the disposal of Pius IX, was to return, on January 1, 1873. This visit did not take place and Mr. de Bourgoing, who resigned the next day, was replaced by Mr. de Corcelles. In July, the French government "granted a few months of leave" to Mr. Fournier, who did not return to his post and was replaced there, on December 4, by the Marquis de Noailles. Mr. Fournier was personally very appreciated by Victor-Emmanuel.

If we act, on the one hand, as resolute conservatives, if, on the other, we practice a policy of almost absolute reserve towards the outside world, I in no way despair of seeing the bad will of Germany.

In addition, considering the vitality of France, its wealth, its productive power, in a word its moral and material resource, I still have confidence in the ... I future of our country.

I would like to end by telling you something which, I hope, will not offend you. The choice of Mr. the Duke of Aumale for the presidency would have been very badly seen in Berlin and would have added a lot to our embarrassment. I believe that a similar feeling would have prevailed in Petersburg and Vienna.

I named the Austrian ambassador two or three times in my dispatches. Count Karolyi, usually very reserved and very silent, a very admirer, until recently, of Mr. Thiers, is one of

those who have shown me the most sympathy for the victory of the conservatives. More than once already, he has congratulated me on the results that it could not fail to have for France and from which all of Europe would also benefit.

Lord Odo Russell told me this very day that, in recent times, Lord Lyons would have expressed to him the darkest presentiments about France; but, since May 24, he has been struck by the changes occurred in public opinion, and his way of seeing is no longer the same. "It is obvious," Russell added to me, "that insecurity has been replaced by a remarkable feeling of security in you." Finally, I was assured that Prince Orloff had been frightened for some time by Mr. Thiers' moves towards the left; he would therefore have been reassured, satisfied with what you managed to do..."

The Duke de Broglie had asked me to escape for a few days, if it was possible, to come to Versailles to talk with him. I felt the need for it as much as he did, because since the change of president and ministry, I had still only communicated by letters with the new president of the Council, and face-to-face conversations could not fail to establish for us the both, much better than a correspondence, on so many subjects regarding which it was essential for us to inform each other and to understand each other. I therefore spent barely three days in Paris and Versailles around the middle of July, and after having chatted usefully with the Duke de Broglie and with many of our friends, I returned to Germany.

I stopped at Coblenz, following the wishes expressed to me by the Empress. A few days later, on the 29th, the Emperor came to pay a visit to Schlangenbad, where I myself was, to his sister-in-law, Princess Charles of Prussia; I had the honor of being received by him; we talked at length about France. Here is a letter that I wrote to the Duke de Broglie, to

tell him of the conversations that I had just had with the Emperor and the Empress:

Schlangenbad, July 31, 1873.

My dear friend,

I have sent, on 29, a telegram and I am sending you today a dispatch to tell you about my interview with the King. I extremely regret not being able to give you good news about the evacuation of Verdun.

With certain financial advantages offered to Germany, the French government would have wanted to obtain an anticipation of this evacuation on the date fixed by the convention of March 15.

I did not leave you with much hope when I left Paris, and I am convinced, by everything I see, hear and read here, that an attempt on my part would have been perfectly useless. The King did not let himself be deterred. While listening to me, even showing a certain satisfaction with what I told him, mainly about the failure suffered by radicalism, he remained reserved and did not delve into any subject. But, twice, he returned to the account of Mr. Thiers, to his great services, to the confidence that he had been able to inspire abroad, and he even touched, quite lightly it is true, but for the second time since May 24, due to the ingratitude shown to the former president. He spoke to me again about pilgrimages, which he attributes to an overexcitement of the Catholic spirit, making me understand that politics could well allow itself to be invaded by religion, and you will read in the dispatch a disparaging word from him for the French character, which he said to the Italian minister on this subject. This remark was made at the same time to a great Russian lady, who repeated it to me: "Pilgrimages are very fashionable today; but, in France, we

move easily from one excess to another.” Besides, my daughter, placed very close to the King, heard it. From all this, we must conclude that Germany's dispositions are not benevolent towards us; they are even less so than the day after May 24. I responded as best I could to all the assertions that the King made, moreover, with the courtesy that distinguishes him and in a very moderate tone. Without agreeing with his point regarding pilgrimages, I agreed with him that we were making too much noise. It cannot be denied, unfortunately, that these mistrusts have spread from Germany to other countries. I see some foreigners here; they tell me that we generally fear the clericalism of our government, that we accuse it of intolerance, that we are not sure that it did not involve it in the question of civil burials,

The prefect-mayor of Lyon, in order to put an end to the demonstrations which civil commitments give rise to, had made an arrangement on June 18th setting at six o'clock in the morning in summer and seven o'clock in winter the burials carried out without the participation of any religion recognized by law.

In Paris, on June 20, the members of the right of the Assembly, delegated by lot to attend the funeral of Mr. Brousses, deputy for Aude, withdrew upon learning that the convoy did not pass through the church. The detachment of cuirassiers which appeared in the procession had returned to its district.

This decree and this incident provoked a questioning of Mr. Le Royer, deputy of Rhône, which resulted in the vote of an order of the day approving the government, by 413 votes against 251.

that we blame the numerous pilgrimages, especially since we are convinced that they have a more political than religious

aim; finally, one would fear that the awakening of the religious spirit would end up leading the government into adventures, notably a war against Italy, etc., etc.

On this last point, a person connected with a number of high-ranking politicians has called my attention to the relations of Italy with Germany, and believes that a treaty has been concluded between these two powers. Nothing can be said in such a matter, because what was not accomplished yesterday may be accomplished tomorrow. I do not believe, however, that the fact is correct; but it is certain that the events of May 24 brought the cabinets of Berlija and Rome closer together.

On my return from Paris, I went to see the Empress in Coblenz. She was very interested in knowing the impressions that I brought back from France, to which she really showed interest. She also spoke to me about Mr. Thiers, for whom, moreover, she only has a fairly moderate liking. She told me that in Germany they had not expected her retirement and that they had been wary of the feeling which had brought about the changes in the government, that they had not yet been built on its policy, that all this explained the reserve kept by Germany towards us.

I replied to him that this reservation had not escaped me, but that it surprised me from a government which presented itself as conservative and had always shown me great fears about the spread of radicalism, and I added that the event accomplished here was just as favorable to Europe as to France, which she readily agreed with. She was very satisfied with the assurances I gave her of our very peaceful arrangements, and she assured me that the other States of Europe shared them entirely. It is an impression that she gathered, in particular, from the long conversations she had in Vienna with Count Andrassy, and she was kind enough to tell me that she had promised to bring them back to me. I learned,

moreover, from the very mouth of a person to whom the Emperor of Germany said it in Petersburg, that he had neither the slightest desire nor the slightest intention to make war on France.

I was already convinced of it, and you remember, my dear friend, that I told you so at Versailles.

As for what concerns Mr. Thiers, I told the Empress that it would be unjust to believe that people in France had forgotten the eminent services he had rendered, but that recognition could not and would not should blind us to the perils of a direction such as that given by Mr. Thiers, especially in recent times, to our internal affairs; that this had been the cause of the break between the former president and the conservatives; that she was regrettable, but that it could not be avoided, and that overall a success for the conservatives could only be well received in Europe. She understood all this perfectly. You see, my dear friend, how confidential what I am telling you is.

"In summary, our situation in Europe continues to be delicate. Germany certainly has a lot to do with it. But what to do? What you will certainly do, that is to say, be very wise, very prudent, and avoid extreme parties. During my stay in Versailles, I repeated over and over again to my friends how imprudent they were in provoking so many religious demonstrations, at least in not trying hard enough to remove all political appearances from them. Say it again and have it said a lot, it's very essential."

I wrote again on this subject, on August 14, to the Duke de Broglie:

"There is, moreover, a point which has always worried me, and I believe I discussed it with you in Paris: that is the question religious in Germany. Mr. de Bismarck, carried away by passion, made it one of the bases of his policy.

The resistance he encounters and which becomes more and more irritating him, and, far from defeating him, it acts on his will as a stimulant; his mind is fertile in resources, he is unscrupulous, of rare boldness, and he is only occupied, I am convinced, in seeking new means of triumph. Furthermore, he fears France, he fears the awakening of the religious spirit there, and would regard it as a possible encouragement to the resistance that the Catholics put up against him. Finally, he certainly sees with concern the horizons which have opened up in favor of a probable return of the monarchy in France, and thanks to the chatter of the press, the inappropriate and indiscreet comments - to say nothing more - of the newspapers and of certain members of the extreme right, such as the cries of alarm raised by the *Journal des Débats* and other consorts, he believes that M, the Count of Chambord, becoming king, will adopt above all a policy of religious, papal, etc., etc. reaction."

A little later, the Duke de Broglie reported to me a conversation between him and a diplomat accredited to Paris, very likely to cast a sinister light on the dispositions of Prince Bismarck towards France:

Versailles, September 4 1873.

My dear friend,

My letter of yesterday was written, and the courier was ready to leave, when Prince Orloff came to see me, and I had with him an interesting and disturbing conversation which I believe I owe to you. give notice immediately.

To fully appreciate it I must begin by telling you that about a fortnight ago, I took advantage of the trip of our colleague, Mr. de Chaudordy, to Switzerland, to ask him to see Prince Gortchakoff, currently on vacation in Lucerne, and to inform him, in a few familiar conversations, of the true situation

of our affairs. Chaudordy had to insist mainly on this point that, not planning to bring any trouble in Europe, not seeking any revenge, neither material in Alsace and Lorraine, nor moral in Italy, asking only to rebuild ourselves and to collect ourselves, we were entitled to the good offices, to the sympathy of all of Europe, if this peaceful work of internal regeneration were to be interrupted by picking some nasty quarrel between us. Chaudordy found the prince in the best spirits, and the conclusion of the interview was that during his visit to Berlin, he would explain himself very clearly to Bismarck, and make him understand that he could not count, in an aggression without reason, on nobody's behalf.

It is certain, for me, that Prince Orloff, although he did not tell me, had knowledge of these talks or, of less, that he suffered the consequently, by coming to see me... He began by asking me if I had any news of affairs in Spain, which led me to talk about the role played by the German navy on the coasts of Andalusia,

In the period of anarchy which followed the abdication of King Amédée (February 11, 1873), England and Germany made a demonstration on the coast of Andalusia, to protect the interests of their nationals. Captain Reinhold Werner, commander of the German frigate Frederick Charles, treated the federalist insurgents like pirates. On July 15, he captured the armored frigate Vigilante which had flown the red flag. On August 1, he also seized, in the waters of Malaga, two ships, the Almanza and the Vittoria, belonging to the insurgents, took them to Cartagena, disarmed them and kept the insurgent general as a hostage. Werner was disowned, but these incidents appeared suspicious

provided a very natural transition to Mr. de Bismarck and his current mood. "Make no mistake," he said to me, "his irritation with you is great; it began on May 24, and has only grown since then." He then gave me interesting details on the little diplomatic dispute which took place regarding the recognition of the Marshal; then he continued: "What is most singular is that knowing, as he certainly knows, the state of your army (certainly very fine, especially for the short time you have spent reconstitute, but still imperfect, you know), having, in all parts of France, Prussian officers in the field, to keep him informed of everything that happens in your regiments, he affects to believe that "You are on a war footing and ready to attack Germany with formidable force."

"I entered into the thoughts of my interlocutor, and I made, regarding the reproach and the alleged threats of clericalism, exactly the same observation that he had suggested to me from the military point of view. "I have no doubt," I said, "that the Chancellor knows our political society as well as our army. Do you think that he seriously believes in our ultramontane crusade "in Italy and Germany? — No, he replied, "although on this point he is more susceptible to precautions than on the others."

"Various other subjects were discussed in the same tone of confidence: among others dynastic perspectives, and the fusion of the house of Bourbon. He did not conceal from me that this family, in all its branches, was the object of the animated version of Mr. de Bismarck." "He has some taste," he told me, "for the imperial regime; but, in the end, what he prefers for you is a dissolving republic."

We had to conclude. "I see clearly," I told him, "that animadversion is at its height; I understand wonderfully that people would be delighted to find us guilty, to have any pretext

to provoke us, for example, to have to take up the defense of some so-called oppressed person, in Switzerland, in Italy, in Spain. "But if we give no pretext, - and we have not given the shadow of one since May 24, any more than before (here the prince gave the most explicit signs of assent), — do you think that we could go so far as to do without the appearance of a reason?" He hesitated for a moment and continued: "As ambassador, I cannot say anything of the sort; as a man, I fear." — And at another moment in the conversation, he added: "When your millions are paid, and he no longer has any reason to spare you, who can know what he will think about?"

I will spare you everything I said then on the theme that I had sought to develop through Chaudordy, the need to come to our aid, if we were troubled in the most legitimate work, and the most useful for Europe itself, etc. I found the same welcome as in Lucerne: promise to speak energetically; invitation to be kept informed of everything that could worry. "Alert us at the slightest clue," he said to me; "and when Le Flô returns to Saint Petersburg, let him constantly repeat to the Emperor what you have just told me; you have to tell him things several times so that they sink in."

"I do not want to exaggerate the importance of this interview... However, I cannot doubt that, in this case, Orloff was not entirely speaking for himself, and that the opinion came from higher up. Now compare this very serious indicator to the presentiments of Baude (*Minister of France in Brussels.*) and the Belgian Minister of Affairs, to the increasing violence of the German press, and finally to the upcoming trip of Victor-Emmanuel to Berlin, and you will find that a very keen solicitude is necessary, and that I am not wrong to ask it of you.

Here are the points on which it seems essential to me to be promptly clarified: Is there, as I am assured from several quarters, a redoublement of armaments and military preparations at this moment? The Minister of War showed me, the other day, a letter from our military attaché, Mr. de Polignac, which reported on an interview with a senior member of the army, who allegedly spoke to him about l'm war as the next, adding, upon his observation that we were doing nothing to provoke it: "But it is not certain that I was this enigmatic statement actually made?"

"I, for my part, as you think, do my examination of conscience, and I see if, on any point on the horizon, we have come into conflict: I see nothing that the wolf can reproach the 'lamb. Relations with Italy and Switzerland are good, and apart from the fear that the merger gives to the holders of Rome, we have no recriminations to fear on this side."

There is nothing threatening or excessive about our armaments, and we are proposing a reduction in staff on Mr. Thiers' projects. You have all the powers to complete the liquidation which is being debated in Strasbourg, if, as I hope, it did not already end yesterday with a reciprocal agreement from the commissioners. I have just removed the chancellor of the Munich legation, about whom there had been complaints, and the noise that the German press made about this incident shows the poverty of his real grievances. The only vulnerable point is perhaps the tone of our press, a hundred times less aggressive than that of the German press, but for which, due to the extraordinary powers of the state of siege, we could be held responsible. This is quite difficult to suppress. How can we prevent the French from speaking badly of their winners, who are still so ungenerous in their success?

“Farewell, my dear friend, and after having done all, we can for our unfortunate country, let us trust in God's help and his justice.”

A few days after this letter, I found myself in Baden. The Empress of Germany was also there at the same time, following her custom. I had the honor of seeing her from time to time, either on walks or at her home, but very rarely. On September 12 - I had arrived two or three days ago - she was kind enough to arrange to meet me in the very simple apartment of a rental house with which she was content in this place. That evening, I had a conversation with her of some interest, which I communicated very confidentially to the Duke de Broglie who was, as I have already said, both my boss and my friend.

I went to see the Empress last night, I wrote to her. I told you that I had never had anything but to praise her kindness to me, and, in many circumstances, she showed me a confidence that touched me. She and I avoid touching on subjects exclusively political; Sometimes we get to know them at least, and it is not without benefit for me, because she has a high spirit and is generally free from prejudices. So, we talked at length along the lines that I have just indicated, and I must tell you that his conversation was marked by the concern that everyone has about the present and the future. While maintaining a reserve which was appropriate for our mutual situation, I sought to reassure her about France's tendencies from various points of view, tendencies which are so unfairly worried in Germany. Despite her good dispositions and despite the elevation of her spirit, I did not personally find her entirely free from these prejudices, which are so exploited against us today. I was not very surprised otherwise, because these mistrusts exist in a way in the air that we breathe here

and of which it seems impossible, for that very reason, to the most distinguished minds not to be more or less impregnated.

I add that these concerns, aroused by the fear of a new outcry in France, and especially by the excessive development of religious demonstrations, are not only noticed in Germany, but are found among almost all foreigners, judging by the conversations I have had since my stay in German waters. Let us not hide from ourselves that this is a symptom likely to make us think. I did not wait until this day to believe that these pilgrimages, so respectable in principle, were inappropriate in our time, perhaps because of the too noisy form given to them, and mainly in because of the shadows they cause, rightly or wrongly. Now, I am even more convinced of it and I look at all our friends who practice them, as in some way making themselves accomplices of excessive imprudence, capable of causing us the most serious embarrassments.

People will perhaps find me a little keen on the subject of pilgrimages, but please think about this: Germany, being engaged in a very lively conflict with the Catholics and their bishops, was very suspicious of the direct and even indirect encouragement that the latter could find in the attitude and language of foreign Catholics, and her victories had made her particularly demanding - even violent - vis-à-vis from France. Moreover, all foreign countries - most of them very unsympathetic to France, let us not forget - were shocked by this excess of Catholic zeal and feared above all, in the interest of peace, the development of clerical questions, from which could arise, according to them, a war between France and Italy. I add that the letter that I am reporting was a private letter, for the Duke de Broglie alone, and that, therefore, his expressions were not weighed as they would have

been if this letter had been a dispatch, or simply a letter communicated to many people. (G.-B.)

I do not neglect an opportunity to say or write it to my friends; it would be useful if you did the same on your part, at least if you continued to do so, because I am convinced that in this respect you are not at your first recommendation "The Empress said one more word to me from which I could conclude that my situation in the future would perhaps be more delicate and more difficult than it has been up to now, that is to say as long as we have been taking into account V Germany. By saying this to me, in a very benevolent form, did she allude to some specific design of Germany, to embarrassments that she would seek to cause us a little later? I very much doubt it, firstly because she is very foreign to politics, M. de Bismarck being full of distrust, at the same time as ill will towards her, then because her rather speculative spirit is more affected of the general aspect of things than of the details and even of the facts. I therefore believe that she was impressed, in saying this to me, by the general and sad glance that we had taken together, a little before, on the general situation and on the social perils of the future. However, I believed

see, in some of his words, an allusion to the shady dispositions of Europe in the presence of the religious manifestations of our country, and in particular to the dispositions of Prince Bismarck.

“Without attaching exaggerated importance to this interview, I believe it would be useful to communicate to you very confidentially the impressions I gathered from it.”

The minister had expressed the desire to see me return to Berlin at the time when the King of Italy Victor-Emmanuel would come there. My presence seemed to me to offer more inconveniences than advantages, I made the observation to the Duke de Broglie at the end of the letter that I have just brought back: “I am at your orders to return to Berlin during the visit of the king of Italy. Allow me to point out to you, however, that in all probability there will not be a single ambassador there. The one from Russia, who is in Baden with me, will not go there. It seemed to me that he did not even find it very appropriate that an ambassador far from Berlin at this time of year should travel for such an occasion, especially since, in all probability, the interference of the diplomatic corps in the celebrations given on this occasion will be limited to a simple presentation to the King. And this - with other considerations - helps to establish the difference between this visit and that of the three Emperors last year. The Austrian ambassador will not come there any more than the English one, unless there are formal orders from his court, and you will know from Lord Lyons if the cabinet of Saint James must give any. I will therefore be alone in Berlin if you want to see me there, and in this case my position will be a little awkward, a little embarrassing. What appearance will I make while the two sovereigns and their ministers come to an agreement on questions of policy - without admitting myself as a third party, of course?”

The minister did not insist. I don't know what my colleagues did; but it seemed courteous to me to apologize to the Italian minister in Berlin, Count de Launay, basing my

absence from Berlin on my health. I charged Mr. Debains, who acted as first secretary and very usefully replaced me in the management of affairs, to see Mr. de Launay, then to listen a little at the doors and to tell me what he heard. On September 16, he wrote me an interesting letter, which I will transcribe here almost in full.

After certain details on the internal administration of the embassy and on the presence of our officers sent to Germany on the occasion of the major maneuvers, with whom we would greatly seek conversation on the "fusion", Debains said that if our government had in Berlin another envoy having a less good position than the one I have there following him, he would have to refrain from bringing him back here during the visit of King Victor-Emmanuel: "It is," he adds, an anti-French and anti-Catholic demonstration. Mr. de Launay, who was the first to come to see me, a fortnight ago, and to whom I visited yesterday, told me very vivid things about France, about our bishops and about the majority of the National Assembly. He praised the latest work of Mr. Littré on the Constitution of our country.

It is a newspaper article which had appeared in the Phare de la Loire and which was entitled: Political Constitution of France. It was directed against the attempted monarchical restoration, as well as two other articles published in the same newspaper. The author brought them together, in the month of October, in a brochure, under this title: Restoration of legitimacy and its allies.

He noted the discontent of some of our conservative newspapers, regarding the praise given by the *Correspondance provinciale* to Mr. Thiers; finally, he spoke in very harsh terms about the book by General de La Marmora.

The general of La Marmora, born in Turin in 1804 and died in Florence in 1878, led the Sardinian troops to Crimea in 1855, where he took part in the fighting before Sevastopol. He was President of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs when, on April 8, 1866, against Austria, between Prussia and Italy, the treaty of offensive and defensive alliance was concluded which assured the latter power the cession of the Veneto.

Later, dissatisfied with Prussia, General de La Marmora published, in 1873, the dispatches of the Italian envoy, General Govone, who had signed the 1866 treaty in Berlin with Bismarck. This publication, made with hostile intent to Prince Bismarck, was exploited against him. Its title was: A little lighter on the political and military events of 1866.

"I felt very little pricked by the sting; I was on my way, well prepared by your instructions, supported by my personal convictions, and I left with some vigor. "In short," I told him, "there is a depth of bitterness in France among certain minds; it is impolitic, poorly reasoned, but excusable. The government of the Emperor Napoleon III helped you, in 1859, to remove the Austrians from the Milanese, and the head of power in France still bears the name of one of the victories of this campaign. "Later, in 1866, your government resorted to all kinds of negotiations which I do not appreciate, but as a result of which you were sure of obtaining Venetia; "General La Marmora's book is authentic.

"Later, Italy was able to attribute to Prussia all the merit of this alliance which crowned its fortune. In its origins, as in its scope, the treaty, in reality, had been the work of Napoleon III. Bismarck was not mistaken when he said to Govone: "All that, of course, if France wishes."

Against his ill will, "it would not be possible." (Emile Bourgeois, Historical Manual of Foreign Policy, t. III, Present Time, p. 478.)

Finally, you "had signed the convention of September 15, 1864;

Under the terms of this convention, France promised to evacuate Rome in two years, and Italy to prevent any attack against the Holy See authorized to recruit an army of volunteers. An attempt on Rome by Garibaldi, who took advantage of the French evacuation, led, in October 1867, the expedition of a new body of troops which defeated the Garibaldians at Mentana.

many Catholics had become accustomed to relying on this guarantee of temporal power, and it ended at the same time that we were struck to the heart by the German invasion! Admit that today you have assumed a difficult task, because you are obliged to give us proof that the sovereignty of the Pope and the independence of the Catholic Church will be effectively respected under the new regime that you have substituted for this "ten centuries-old" guarantees of temporal power. This is a great novelty in history, and can we be surprised that fervent Catholics - especially among those who are little acquainted with politics - are little reassured when in your newspapers and in your public meetings we violently attack the institution and the necessary privileges of the Catholic Church, whose head lives among you? Why attack these awakenings of faith among us, why be so severe for the more or less happy forms in which they manifest themselves, when we are in the aftermath of the days when France experienced all the furies of the atheistic and revolutionary spirit?"

The attack was lively, direct; it probably embarrassed the Italian minister, who avoided following his interlocutor onto his territory, spoke of Italy's good will, of its desire to peacefully resolve the difficulties of a situation that he did not contest, etc., and ends up attacking again the government of France, the bishops, the conservatives. "Do you believe," he said, "that we could follow France when, without warning anyone, she threw herself out of the window in July 1870? Is it wise to disturb our ordeal with the Holy See by offering a pretext for the recriminations of the advanced parties? Our nation needs all its strength, all its calm, to complete the program of its internal reconstitution. Mere appearances of foreign interference make our task more difficult and push away the accommodations that we wish to make with the Holy See. We were not and we are not saints, I grant you; but we do not deserve a tenth part of the evil that is thought of us in France.

"We want to separate the cause of religion from that of politics as much as possible; but how can we not be frightened to see one of the parties which gave the majority to your ministry overexcite religious passions against our national unity, and the bishops considered the most moderate to spread violent insults, perhaps in thought? to get the cardinal's hat! God forbid we ever have popes in a warlike mood like the Bishop of Orléans might be! Would your government admit to being attacked with the acrimony that is being used against us?"

CHAPTER XII

ATTEMPTS AT MONARCHICAL RESTORATION AND GERMANY

Opinion abroad. — Letters from M. le duc de Broglie to M. de Gontaut. — He insists on the peaceful intentions of the future monarchy. — Interviews between M. de Gontaut and various people in Berlin. — The apprehensions of the Italian minister. — Severe judgment from the Belgian minister on Mr. Thiers. — Mr. de Gontaut is preparing to come and take part in the vote, in the National Assembly, for the restoration of the monarchy. — The failure of the monarchy. — Letter from M. le Duke de Broglie to M. de Gontaut. — Prorogation of the powers of Marshal MacMahon. — M. de Gontaut in France; interviews with Marshal de Mac-Mahon and the Duke of Brogue. — Notification to Germany of the extension of the Marshal's powers.

In one of his letters, the Duke de Broglie addressed a subject which was much discussed at that time: the re-establishment of the monarchy, made practicable by the reconciliation of the two branches of the House of France, what was called all short the merger. All of Europe was occupied by it, because it felt that such an event could probably result in a change of regime in France; but this transformation was not seen in the same light everywhere. Certain powers, considering it from the general point of view of conservative and monarchical principles, shaken for a hundred years by the attacks of the Revolution, desired the restoration of the monarchy; still, perhaps, they did not make a sufficient distinction between the re-establishment of the empire and that of royalty; sympathies were divided on this point. Others were not dominated by such lofty considerations: hostility against France, at least jealousy, held the main place in their policy, taking away their desire to see it recover from the disasters of 1870. Considering the republic as the regime most capable of satisfying their views, they preferred France

weakened by the republic to France restored by the monarchy. Germany was resolutely of the latter. Moreover, she relied on her strength to defend herself against external enemies and against the revolution. Russia, on the contrary, can be regarded as the type of the first.

Here is what the minister wrote to me:

“The merger of the House of Bourbon being obviously the main reason or at least the apparent reason for this redoubled mood,

It concerns the bad dispositions of Prince Bismarck towards France.

it is important for us to know where ... language you can use. Believe me, things are as we are at this point. respect and what less, much less advanced than the newspapers say, and that the monarchy has a lot to do before regaining possession of France. If, the day after the visit of the Count of Paris, the Count of Chambord had said a word, just one, which would have seemed to contradict those that he had said too much for two years, a great movement would have been declared in the intelligent classes and enlightened, and their enthusiasm would perhaps have been communicated to the conservative underbelly of universal suffrage. But the obstinate silence, not only of the prince himself, but of all those who approach him and who obviously have nothing good to say, has paralyzed this movement ready to be born, while the still living prejudices of our campaigns are furiously exploited by the radical journals. This is a great social danger and one that I am very seriously concerned about. But from the point of view of foreign policy, there is absolutely — and you can boldly affirm this — nothing to fear. Mr. Count de Chambord would be on the throne tomorrow and he would have to practice, at all costs, the policy that we are following; he would not find ten

people, even at the extreme right of the Assembly, to advise him to wage war in the name of the temporal power of the Pope. Our friends the pilgrims indulge in loud words and sincere prayers; but not one of them thinks of going on a crusade. Nigra, the Italian minister, knows this well, and said to someone who repeated it to me: "Mr. de Broglie is obliged to give me more pledges than Mr. Thiers, and the Count of Chambord would give me even more than M. de Broglie!" You can therefore completely reassure those who are sincerely worried about this possibility; I say: sincerely, because if the worry is only played, it is clear that no words can be enough to dissipate it.

"This is all I can tell you today, my dear friend. Take a good look and let me know. Alas! we can only watch, not having the strength to prevent anything. But when we are warned, we sometimes prevent events ourselves."

Was the Duke de Broglie poorly informed and unaware that the monarchy was closer to the goal than he believed, or did things move more quickly than he had supposed? The last supposition is, I believe, the true; but it would be necessary to conclude that the prejudices mentioned by the Duke against the person of Mr. Count de Chambord - prejudices, one may say in passing, which were perhaps more deeply rooted in the Duke de Broglie than in many others - gave way more quickly than he would have thought possible. He himself, moreover, would agree a month later that the question was well under way. As to the consequences of the reestablishment of the monarchy in France, in relation to the outside world, I absolutely shared his opinion, and my language had long been consistent with that which he advised me to adopt.

Negotiations were actively underway. By the middle of October, they had reached a point where it was reasonable to believe that nothing would further delay the solution. But the

last step to take in serious matters is usually the one before which we reflect; we consider the difficulties overcome, and we understand everything that needs to be done to make this last step decisive. The Duke de Broglie wrote to me on October 18 from Versailles:

You are back in Berlin, my dear friend, and you arrive there at perhaps one of the most critical moments in our history. Events will now unfold in France with the speed that the national character imparts to all our movements. The concessions obtained from the Count of Chambord appear serious and considerable, even to the most difficult of the constitutional party. It is to be believed that the agreement of the two large fractions of the majority will be reached on this ground, which suits them both, and that we will be led to play the big game. I was incredulous and even resistant until the last hour, not believing that we would obtain what could calm the very strong prejudices of the country. The chariot seems launched to me today, and I do not believe that we could hold it back, if we wanted to. To what extent can the government come on board to lead it? This is what we are going to examine with my colleagues, who are not all unanimous, and the Marshal, whose disinterestedness, dedication to the country, enlightened zeal for the cause of order, are beyond all praise. Anyway, this is just a secondary question. The role of the government can only be secondary in the memorable and after all quite grandiose struggle that is about to begin.

I am thinking a lot about your situation in Berlin while this debate is going on here. I cannot doubt that malevolence is at its height against any monarchical combination. Mr. de Bismarck obviously pursues it, with this instinctive hatred that he has for everything that concerns France, and with this mixture of sincere impatience and played terror that he shows

against everything that can come to the aid of the interests of the Catholic Church which he persecutes...

All this will make you, like us, a difficult quarter of an hour to get through, and all your vigilance is not too much to notice in time and thwart all the bad tricks that will inevitably be played on us to increase our inner difficulties. I repeat to you what I have already told you: When you meet sincere people, truly worried that we are setting fire to Europe, for the cause of the temporal power of the Pope, reassure them with the right reasons. Tell them - and you will not lack the proof - that all precautions are being taken so that the monarchical government, if it is re-established, does not fall into the hands of the narrow coterie to which Mr. the Count of Chambord has too often listened; invoke the state of public opinion, which would not allow anything of the sort, and the constitutional guarantees with which the new power would be surrounded. You have enough to convince those who can be convinced. With others, talk little, appear calm, sure of your actions, do not show too much agitation or worry. After all, our territory is liberated; our debts are paid; we no longer depend on a whim and a frown. I know how precarious and uncertain this independence is with our empty arsenals and our open border. But the fact remains that we must find new pretexts to start new quarrels. Pretexts, no doubt, never fail to stronger. There is, however, in Europe enough interest in an unhappy nation seeking to rise again, enough memories attached to the monarchical cause, for it not to be possible for the crowned revolutionary of Varzin to provoke us, if we do not provide him with the opportunity. Drop all the teasing that you don't believe is serious, and give Mr. de Bismarck the trouble of not appearing too moved by his anger. We have the right, if not the force, to have the calm that suits this situation which is not without dignity.

“A delicate point that I leave to your good judgment: it is to know whether you believe you can come and take part in this great vote. I understand how much you will want it, and we will not be so sure of ourselves as not to need everyone. But the position you keep is very important: will you believe you can leave it?...”

I wrote at some length to my tour to the Duke de Broglie in order to report to him all that I learned, all that that people came to tell me, the assessments of German statesmen as well as those of the diplomatic corps on the great event which everyone, abroad as well as in France, was expecting.

“I thank you, my dear friend, for your letter of the 18th,” I wrote to him on October 25; it happens to me, in fact, in the midst of these circumstances whose seriousness is as well appreciated abroad as in France. I am happy with your personal impressions regarding the agreement obtained between the Count of Chambord and the National Assembly. For a long time, I had been calling for this agreement with all my wishes, and what I allowed myself to send to the prince and to his close friends on this subject was entirely in accordance with the solution adopted. Let us now hope for the soon realization of so many hopes.

...You are right that we will have one and the other a quarter of an hour difficult to pass; may there be only one! The malevolence, in fact, is patent here: we must therefore expect everything it is capable of suggesting. Nevertheless, it seems for the moment that we are quite ready to take sides with an event that we see as imminent. The tone of the newspapers softens; insults against monarchists and ultramontanes are less repeated; the Bonapartists and the Republicans are accused of clumsiness and something more; we praise Mr. Thiers less than we did in the salons; we are beginning to

believe in the Count of Chambord and in the monarchy, whereas we were still doubting it until recently. The most recent of the newspaper articles that I am sending you today belongs to a newspaper called the Post which, although not unofficial, is however known to receive its inspiration from the Ministry of the Interior. It is, relatively speaking, a good article, which contains some correct assessments.

"Your way of judging the language to be used here is quite similar to mine: reasoning with those who have no bias; — do not seek out others; — appear calm and confident with everyone..."

The main conversations that were sought with me, on this memorable occasion, took place with the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. de Bülow, the Grand Chamberlain Count de Redern, Lord Odo Russell, ambassador of England, Count de Launay, minister of Italy, and Baron de Nothomb, minister of Belgium.

The day I saw Mr. de Bulow, we had just learned the results of the Salzburg conference between Mr. Count de Chambord and the delegates of the Assembly. The Secretary of State maintained, moreover, a diplomatic reserve which was not surprising in his position, especially when we remember that he was, in particular, the Chancellor's locum tenens.

He described the very interesting result obtained and added: "France is always a subject of astonishment for foreign nations. What elasticity! what prodigious vitality!" And at the same time, he admitted as very natural our desire to seek a definitive establishment. "As for Germany," he added after reviewing the questions which could attract the attention of the cabinets, "its policy has no other aim than to avoid all complications; it is the formal will of the Emperor." I took note of these words, and, seeking to dissipate some fears that he had allowed to emerge about the religious tendencies of the

entourage and adherents of Mr. the Count of Chambord, - a constant and repeated object until the satiety of concerns abroad, - I made it clear in a few words to Mr. de Bülow that what was being prepared at home was in no way threatening to the tranquility of Europe, quite the contrary.

Count Redern, whose official position was purely honorary, was less reserved towards me than the Secretary of State, and I myself entered with more developments into the order of ideas that I had touched, without going into too much detail, with M. de Bilow. It was not, moreover, the first conversation I had with Count de Redern, and what I had gathered from both of them was of a nature to interest me.

Personally, Emperor William would welcome the restoration; but it would not be the same everywhere, and Prince Bismarck was clearly designated to me as representing, in the sovereign's councils, tendencies that can be described as revolutionary. Concerned above all about religious laws and the conflict which followed in Prussia, he feared the creation in France of a rent of Catholic reaction.

Two months after the failure of the conflict, Prince Bismarck told me, "it was because we feared the empire that the clerical party would take over him." And he felt obliged to add: "And yet, it would be impossible to reproach us for having done the slightest thing against him." A word that should have made me dreamy. I do not know if in this circumstance Prince Bismarck tried to do something against the return of the Count of Chambord: what does not leave the shadow of a doubt is the persistence of his hostility against the monarchy in France, and what makes very little of it is its participation in the intrigues of the opposition against the conservative government on the 16th of May 1877.

(G.-B.)

But, curious detail and symptomatic of German susceptibilities, my interlocutor, in boasting to me of the good dispositions of the Emperor for France, believed to give me proof in the fact that he had expressed himself with moderation on the recent formation of the ten-eight army corps! To which I replied that it was simply a measure resulting from the military law passed a year ago by the Assembly. Nevertheless, as Germany's mistrust was constantly aroused, to say nothing more strongly, about our military reorganization and our Bellicose projects, I thought it necessary, partly because of the future which seemed to shine for France in its internal affairs, insist on our peaceful views. I cited to Count de Redern a recent decree, issued at the suggestion of the Minister of War, General du Barail, removing a battalion or squadron from all the regiments, so that despite the creation of a few more regiments, there had a reduction in cadres, and, in fact, the obligation to put many officers in line.

"No one, moreover," I said to him, not bending my mind to the question which occupied us, but in the sincerity of my conscience, "no one serious could think of a war against Germany or against Italy. There is only one policy: that of "national prudence"; it will undoubtedly be the policy of the Count, who frankly admitted to me that he did not regret it. "If we were not very sympathetic to the accession of the Count of Chambord, as it was that of Marshal MacMahon and M. Thiers. Without doubt, there is a situation in the Europe of 1873 that we would not have created, and for which our consent was dispensed with; but a government coming to power cannot claim to pose as a champion of little-known rights. Accomplished facts in the political domain have in themselves a great force that cannot be defied with impunity,

and we must take them into account, whether we like them or not. The re-establishment of the monarchy is only a matter of internal order for us: for the moment, according to many politicians, it would be the only possible government in France, despite the very serious coalition. moreover, republicans of all shades against him. He would represent all conservative interests and he should, as such, provide guarantees for the peace of Europe. He will give more than the recent interviews with sovereigns. These are decorated with the title of union for the preservation of peace; basically, they are formed in anticipation of a war which would call into question the territorial state of Europe, and they make us think about it, while we do not think about it. Finally, it is natural to suppose that the re-establishment of the monarchy would be the surest obstacle to the invasion of revolutionary tendencies which can rightly frighten Europe."

I also had to reassure the representative of Italy. My language with him, during a visit he came to make to me and where he broached the same subject, was inspired by very similar considerations, in the face of the apprehensions of which he was the organ.

"We do not fear Mr. Count de Chambord," said Count de Launay, — respect for his person is unanimous, — but the party on which he will rely and which will want to push to extreme consequences "the dogma of legitimacy ". War can come out of this."

It was really not difficult to respond to arguments of this force, which were based neither on facts nor on the examination of the conditions in which France found itself, and of the situation of minds, either inside the Assembly or outside.

But what is always difficult is to contradict prejudices or biases. How many times have I not found myself in Berlin in this position, obliged to respond, - because we must never tire

of responding, - to refute arguments whose weakness my interlocutors knew as well as I did, perhaps even the falsity, in any case the exaggeration! It is certain, however, that there are also those of good faith, who are internally disposed, if not highly, to surrender to the good reasons which are opposed to them. It is at least with regard to these that we should not incur the reproach of having neglected to respond.

Whatever the Italian minister's state of mind, I answered him in all frankness that, if there were in the Chamber a certain number of deputies who did not a priori reject the idea of making the war against Italy, to restore to the Holy See its temporal power, this group certainly did not number a hundred, and I informed him - which he probably did not know - that Mr. the Count of Chambord had recently written to one of the members of this party, the Viscount of Rodez Benavent, a letter in which he had brought to reason the too fiery supporters of an expedition to Rome. I pointed out to him that it was the moderate party which had taken the lead in the monarchical movement and had addressed itself to Mr. Count de Chambord, and that this party, very anxious to reassure the interests of Europe and those of France, would undoubtedly prevail in the advice of the new government.

"There are," I added, "the most obvious reasons why under a regime, whatever it may be, we must think to anything else than to external questions. We are still poor in soldiers, poor in money, and we still have almost everything to organize. It is often said abroad that we pay off our debt of five billion to Germany with "ease"; but don't we know that we have borrowed on our good reputation, that we must impose large taxes on the country to pay the interest and that as a result our budget must bear an additional charge of seven hundred million? Vienna is a bad harvest, a commercial or political crisis, the collection of our taxes is difficult, perhaps even

compromised. It is therefore only with a lot of wisdom, a lot of work, and therefore a lot of tranquility, that we can face our burdens. To wage war, we would absolutely lack money, and if, impossibly, we attempted a loan under current conditions, the capitalists would not subscribe to it. So, this is the true situation, and Mr. Count de Chambord will have to accept it like us if he returns to the throne of France.”

In one of the letters in which I related this confidential interview to the Duke de Broglie, I told him: “The Count de Launay is courteous but frankly hostile; Since his king's visit to Berlin, he has had the effect on me of taking on little airs of triumph that I did not recognize in him until now.”

I developed for the English ambassador the same theme as for the Italian minister, with a few variations. Lord Odo Russell lived on a certain level of intimacy with Prince Bismarck and the men of the German government, and, as such, it was reasonable to fear that he would be influenced to some extent; but to a mind as enlightened as his, I could speak about the affairs of France with a certain freedom of mind. I insisted to him on this point, that it was the influence of moderate men which dominated in the monarchical movement, and as for the dispositions of Mr. Count de Chambord, we had every reason to believe them to be marked by wisdom and prudence in what concerned foreign affairs, whatever country we thought. Lord Odo Russell arrived from Paris, where he found Arnim having resumed his post, after an interview with the Chancellor which would have dispelled, he said, the latter's prejudices against him. At Arnim's, he had lunch with Mr. Thiers and he reported doubtful impressions on the success of the monarchists. At that time, it is true, the result of the Salzburg interview was unknown.

“He was charmed by the conversation of M. Thiers, whom he did not yet know,” I wrote to the Duke de Broglie. But

he was struck by the frequent interviews of Arnim and Thiers — three visits in three days; he claims, however, “not to fully understand what sort of influence the conversations of these two characters could have on the pending solutions.”

“Others than Russell expressed the same thought to me, moreover, when we together noted Germany's ill will for the monarchical restoration.”

At the end of the conversation, Mr. Thiers said to Russell: “I do not believe that the hopes of the fusionists will come true, and I will fight the reestablishment of the monarchy; but if it is voted by the Assembly, I will be the first to give the signal of obedience. This remark greatly struck the English ambassador.”

Those same days I had another interesting conversation with the Belgian minister. I have already mentioned the exceptional situation which a stay of twenty-seven years in Berlin, a moderate character, a wise mind and a sort of balance maintained between the parties in his own country as in others. He was considered and consulted in Berlin; in all these respects, his opinion had, in general, a particular authority. According to Mr. Nothomb, the attitude of the German government towards the monarchy restored under Franco would be expectant, which meant neither hostile nor friendly. Then reviewing the various means of government by which one could have achieved in France the triumph of the ideas of order and conservation, he was severe for the policy of Mr. Thiers in internal affairs: “It is a mistake which he committed, he said, by not siding completely with conservatives of all shades. The elections in Paris and Lyon, by frightening them, led to the fall of the hopes that some of them had based on the establishment of a conservative republic. Mr. Thiers made a serious mistake in his message of November 1872, by asking, before the end, for the republican

organization of France. He thereby left the Bordeaux Pact. He had said with some complacency to several people - to me in particular - that he considered himself solely as the trustee of a large bankruptcy and that his task consisted of only one thing: to carry out the liquidation. The mistake he made then was the primary cause of his setbacks and his downfall. Throughout Europe, where everyone paid tribute to the skill of their efforts to liquidate your disasters, this unforeseen and untimely demonstration caused astonishment. If he had had the wisdom and prudence to set aside his personal feelings in such a serious matter, his powers as President of the Republic would today be assured for a long time." And he concluded by agreeing that the position taken by Mr. Thiers was as unfortunate for his own dignity as for France.

Struck by the judgment passed on Mr. Thiers by a man whose serious nature had more than one resemblance to that of the former president and who, in many ways, was similar to him, I reported it to the Duke de Broglie. Mr. Nothomb's appreciation was, moreover, common to many politicians abroad and naturally led them to explain the causes of the monarchical movement in our country. I observed that these same men were inclined to believe that, if the coalition of the various republican groups prevailed in the Assembly's vote on the form of government, that of the supporters of the conservative republic would have little influence on the direction movement, and that the future would probably belong to the radicals. It must be recognized, seventeen years after these events: the politicians in question had exact notions of the situation and the French character.

As for leaving Berlin to vote in the Assembly in the great question which was going to be decided, here, in two words, is what I replied to the minister: "I attach a lot of value, I make no secret of it, to voting in this important circumstance;

but I would sacrifice this desire without hesitation, if my absence from a very difficult and very delicate position, it is true, seemed to present serious disadvantages to me. Several of my friends have already written to me, recommending that I arrive exactly, even considering my presence as necessary, from the day of the start of the school year, because we will count on the election of My intention would be to arrive at the Assembly only for the vote on the big question. In this case I ask my friends to telegraph me two days in advance, so that I have time to leave and arrive; In this way, I will not be absent from Berlin for more than five or six days, and that will not seem excessive to you, I suppose. In my absence, we can very well appoint Mr. de Sayve as charge d'affaires. Entrusted to Mr. de Sayve and Debains, the affairs will be well guarded. If you think so as I do, please inform me without any delay. I don't have any information yet on how things will work: will we submit the proposal on the very day of the start of the school year? if we ask for the urgency? then if we believe that will the discussion last several days? etc. All this would be necessary for me to know in order to regulate my arrangements; my friends will surely tell me about it. In any case, it is better that I arrive at Versailles a little too early than risk arriving there too late.

I only reproduce these details to give one more indication of the natural preoccupations of everyone at this moment, and of the almost complete certainty we had of the imminent return of royalty. We thought we were so sure and so close that I received, for my part, requests, through intermediary channels, to keep the functions of ambassador to the court of Germany, when the Count of Chambord would have mounted the throne of France.

*I think I must say that this proposal did not please me:
it seemed to me that my acceptance would have*

placed me in a false situation, at least with respect to screws of the German government (G.-B.)

In the meantime, I received from one of the interlocutors cited above a confidence which did not, it is true, have a direct relationship with the event which had been the subject of our discussions, but which was not there either. no longer completely foreign, and whose interest was considerable enough for me to mention it in the middle of the story of the monarchical attempt whose lamentable abortion we will see, moreover, without delay.

This interlocutor - I can name him here, he was the Grand Chamberlain - told me, not without having a little hesitation in confiding the news to me, that the very recent conferences in Vienna between the two emperors and their ministers, Bismarck and Andrassy, would have had the result of ensuring, if not in writing, at least through words very resembling commitments, the understanding between Germany and Austria and their union in the event that France wanted to go to war. He didn't tell me whether it was a war against Germany or against Italy. I answered him calmly, although I understood within myself the importance of the news, that the leagues in favor of peace did not move us much; because it did not enter into the thoughts of the current government and nor, I thought, into those of the monarchical government, to wage war. I had reassured him at length about our peaceful arrangements and I asked him to report all my words to the Emperor; I have no doubt that he did it.

To return to the affair of the monarchical restoration, I will say that the Duke de Broglie had authorized me, in a telegram of the 29th, to come to Versailles whenever I wanted, in any case, towards the end of next week.

This is where we were on October 29, and, on the 31st, a letter from Mr. Count de Ghambord came to overthrow all hopes and disrupt all plans for monarchical restoration! Everything was going to waste. An abyss was widening where the conservatives believed they were building the most durable building. Mr. Count de Ghambord affirmed that he had been misunderstood, and he withdrew the concessions he had made, under the pretext that they wanted to extract new ones from him.

It is necessary to read on this subject the admirable speech delivered by Mr. Chesnelong, at the National Assembly, on November 18, during the discussion of the extension of the powers of Mr. Marshal Mac-Mahon.
(G.-B.)

The survivors of this era will never forget the various impressions which arose tumultuously in all monarchical minds upon reading this fatal letter: surprise, emotion, sorrow, among many anger and indignation, among all the disappointment and above all the despair of finding oneself in a situation worse than the one from which one had wanted to escape, since the efforts made towards this goal had failed.

The poor prince probably did not realize the effect his letter would produce; because, few days afterwards, he secretly arrived at Versailles, with the plan of presenting himself unexpectedly, it is said, in the meeting room of the Assembly and of arousing, by his presence, a movement which his friends would take advantage of to draw in the Assembly and have him proclaimed king.

Did he lack the means to accomplish this project? Did he find no one willing to compromise for him? I do not know; what is certain is that he was unable to see the Marshal as he

had intended, and the unfortunate heir to the kings of France disappeared from Versailles as secretly as he had arrived there. He was not to see France again, and nine years later he died in Austria, in Frohsdorf, carried away by an illness which grief had probably developed.

Immediately after the appearance of the letter from Mr. Count de Chambord, on November 2, the Grand Chamberlain asked me for an appointment. I informed my minister at the time, by telegraph, to obtain exact information on the event. "The Grand Chamberlain," I wrote, "has just asked me for an appointment; obviously, he comes from the Emperor and to obtain information on the situation. Please telegraph to me very quickly what you think. Can I assure you that the Conservatives will keep power and that they are strong enough to do so? It is essential. Are they united for some solution? What will we do at the start of the school year?"

"Is my presence necessary? In that case, I would leave tomorrow evening."

A few hours later, I received from the Duke of Broglie a dispatch responding to mine: "The letter from Mr. Count de Chambord," she said, "has caused all parties to unanimously abandon any idea of reestablishing the monarchy. The majority and the government appear to agree to accept the extension of the powers of Marshal MacMahon, extending them over the long term.

"The ministry remains without modifications until the meeting of the Assembly. The Conservative Party seems more united than ever. "

Furthermore, the Duke de Broglie hastened to write me a confidential letter which arrived the day after the dispatch and which was a somewhat extended reproduction: "Desolation is in the camp of honest people, m he wrote, and the friends of the Count of Chambord are not the least irritated.

Any monarchical attempt becomes impossible, and no one thinks about it anymore. We must provide for society and thank heaven for giving us at such a time a man like the Marshal, around whom we can group.

Upon the start of the session, there will likely be a proposal to extend him in his current powers. This discussion can be important, and I dare not dissuade you from coming.

A thousand very devoted friendships. What a weakening for our diplomatic situation!

The proposal that the Duke de Broglie made me foresee was made to the Assembly and adopted by a fairly large majority. The discussion was lively. The letter from the Count of Chambord had given the Republicans the hope, almost the certainty, that the regime of their dreams would emerge. One of them, Mr. Dufaure, took the liberty, not without some impropriety, of thanking the prince from the top of the tribune. But when they saw the monarchists proposing an intermediate solution between the monarchy and the republic, they became furious, which did not, moreover, show great insight on their part.

The discussion revolved around only two arguments. The conservatives said: The country is still too agitated and too divided for it to be possible to found a definitive government, whatever it may be; let's therefore keep the provisional, by giving to the executive power an authority and a duration which the circumstances require. The Marshal's loyalty would, in all cases, be a sure guarantee that he will not abuse it.

The Republicans replied: It is precisely to calm the country's agitations that it is necessary to give it a definitive government - and they passed over its divisions in silence; — we will give authority and duration to the Marshal, provided that the Assembly ultimately regulates the conditions of the

executive power and those of the legislative power, in other words, provided that it organizes and founds the republic.

This was precisely what the monarchists did not want; because, on the one hand, they were convinced that France was not capable of supporting the republican regime, on the other hand, they hoped that time would give the monarchical solution the chances which it had lacked until then.

All the presidential powers of Mr. Marshal Mac-Mahon were extended in his favor for a period of seven years.

The ministry, formed after May 24, in the hope of an imminent change of government in line with the wishes of the majority of the Assembly, had quite naturally to modify itself, following the abortion of the monarchical projects which not all ministers considered the consequences from the same point of view. The Marshal charged the Duke de Broglie with forming a new cabinet, a responsibility which he accepted with his usual dedication and courage; but the task was thorny and difficult.

I had been in Paris for several days on leave, having attached value to contributing my part, in the difficult circumstances in which we found ourselves, to the law which extended the powers of the Marshal. I ask for the per I ask my readers to copy verbatim my notes of November 23 and 27.

I went to Versailles; I saw the Marshal and the Duke de Broglie there. Both of them discussed with me the ministerial question, which is the subject of their concerns.

The Duke de Broglie, who renounced the portfolio of foreign affairs for himself, said to me: We also talked a lot about you for this ministry; but you have done well in Berlin and it is better to stay where you are doing well than to change a good situation for the unknown. I answered him without hesitation that I would not, moreover, want to accept this post, due to an obstacle that I considered almost insurmountable: the lack of habit of the platform, and, despite a contradiction

courteous and kind of the Duke, I continued by maintaining that, in the circumstances in which we found ourselves, we needed strong ministers, always ready to respond, not to let themselves be dismantled, and that it would be a mistake to choose them from among people lacking these qualities.

After leaving him, I met Count Emmanuel d'Harcourt, secretary of the Presidency. We discussed the same subject and particularly the great difficulty of finding a Minister of the Interior, Mr. Bocher refusing these functions.

"You were Minister of Foreign Affairs for forty-eight hours," he told me, "and if we gave up this combination, it was because it was impossible to replace you in Berlin."

While finding this exaggerated expression aside, I told him that I was sensitive to the good opinion people had of me, that I found it painful to be in Berlin, but that I would find it even more difficult to be a minister.

The Marshal, to whom I then entered, spoke to me spontaneously about the formation of the ministry. Without alluding to this point of view, to my person, he wanted to speak to me of services that I paid to Berlin, of the gratitude that was owed to me, etc. I talked to him about a combination in which it was a question of entrusting the interior portfolio to the Duke de Broglie. The Marshal answered to me what I already knew from the Duke: that he could not consent to it, because he was convinced, knowing well the qualities and faults of Mr. de Broglie, that he would wear out very quickly in this position.

"I regret," he added, "the prejudices which reign in the Chamber against Mr. Beulé, because I assure you that he is very firm. We think of M. de Goulard; but he is not enough. As for Mr. Bocher would be a good choice; but he is too much the man of the Orléans family. Besides, he said, interrupting himself, all this concerns Mr. de Broglie."

Prince Apponyi, Ambassador of Austria-Hungary, showed me yesterday a very good telegram from Count Andrassy instructing him to "warmly" congratulate the Marshal. Prince Gortchakoff telegram is also satisfactory.

On the evening of the 24th, I went to see the Duke de Broglie at Versailles. The difficulties which presented themselves on many sides to stop the formation of the cabinet - because it was necessary to try not to dissatisfy any of the nuances of the right - deeply distressed him, and he had an attack of despair which allowed me to enter into the from the bottom of his heart and to see what righteousness, honesty and decency reigned there: "They will say," he cried, "that it was I who made the union of the conservatives, and God knows if I would like to make it indissoluble! Then he offered me the foreign affairs portfolio. I refused, saying again that I would not be a force for the ministry. "Besides," he continued, "they say that you are no longer from the right. Some members of the far right said you didn't belong to them. I could only smile at this kind of excommunication which had very little effect on me.

Finally, the efforts of the Duke de Broglie succeeded, and, the very day after my conversation with him, the new ministry was constituted. The duke exchanged for the interior portfolio of foreign affairs which Duke Decazes received. This last choice was excellent; the sending of M. de Broglie inside was less fortunate. Mr. Depeyre received the seals, where he replaced Mr. Ernoul. MM. de La Bouillerie, Beulé also left the ministry. Three moderate Legitimists were part of the new: M. de Larcy was one of them.

On the 27th, I was invited to dinner with the Marshal in Versailles. The table had around fifty seats. Among the guests were the new ministers, MM. Depeyre, Decazes, de Larcy, de Fourtou, holder of public education, General Ghangarnier, the

French ambassadors in Rome, in Saint Petersburg, in Constantinople, in Berlin, the Duke of Audiffret-Pasquier, MM. de Tarteron, Tailhand, André (from the Seine), Busson-Duviviers, Jules Buisson (from the Aude), etc. After dinner, the Marshal took me to a living room and we remained alone. He spoke at length, cordially, with me, particularly about the formation of the new ministry, the discontent felt on the far right at the departure of MM. Ernoul and de La Bouillerie, the loyal conduct of the Duke de Broglie, and finally the entry into the ministry of Mr. de Larcy. He told me - what the same morning in the Assembly the latter had told me in almost identical terms - that he had forced his hand.

"I have appointed you," he said to him, "your name will appear tomorrow in the *Moniteur*, and you will resign if that suits you. But if you refuse, ministry becomes impossible; Mr. de Broglie will go. So, I will instruct Mr. de Goulard to form a ministry, which will certainly not be made up of names as sympathetic to the right as this one is, and I no longer know what will become of the majority." To this language, Mr. de Larcy could not oppose anything and he made no further resistance.

"As for these gentlemen of the extreme right," continued the Marshal, "I do not want them to make me say what I did not say, because I would appear to be breaking my word and I never did this. I never promised MM. Ernoul and de La Bouillerie to still leave them at the ministry. I had, in truth, the desire to keep them there; but it depended on the possible combinations. Furthermore, the disagreement between Mr. de Broglie and Mr. Ernoul is truly childish.

And if my memory serves me well, here is how the Marshal would have explained this dissent: "These gentlemen had agreed on this point, that we would not tolerate open opposition from any party, and when we came to the

designation of these parties, Mr. Ernoul admitted the ban for the Orleanist party and for the Bonapartist party, but not for the Legitimist party.

The truth makes it my duty to say that, in an interview the following day, with Mr. Ernoul, the terms of which I could not reproduce exactly, he told me that the Maréchal was erroneous. (G.-B.)

Besides, added the Marshal, I like Mr. Ernoul very much and I hope to be able to take him back into the ministry a little later."

I tried, in my turn, to make the President understand the need to also give compensation to the extreme right, positions in diplomacy for example.

He promised to think about it.

A few days later I returned to my post. Notification of the extension for seven years of the powers of Mr. Marshal Mac-Mahon, as President of the Republic, was made to the German government. It was the Marquis de Sayve who was responsible, in my absence, for sending this communication to the Secretary of State, Mr. de Bilow. The response was not long in coming. The secretary of State declared that "his government saw with satisfaction, in the powers entrusted to the President of the Republic, a new guarantee for the prosperity of France, which he sincerely desired, as well as for the maintenance of good harmony and peaceful relations of the Republic with foreign countries."

It was satisfying and very correct. What reasons did Germany have for not raising the same difficulties in the recognition of the Marshal's new powers as in that of his election to the presidency? Were we not very rightly justified in recognizing in the extension, of a very unusual duration, of the powers of a President of the Republic a more clear-cut

character, a much more important change in the eyes of foreigners, as in those of France, that during his election as president under the same conditions as his predecessor? And yet, this time, nothing similar to the formal difficulties that had been raised previously, and even the most satisfactory declarations in all respects! We could only applaud ourselves. I believe, moreover, that it was possible to see in the ease with which the German government accepted the notification made to it, and in the kind words which accompanied Mr. de Billow's response, an indication of the confidence then inspired by our government and the feelings of respect that Mr. Marshal Mac-Mahon had been able to reconcile since he was in power.

My new leader was Duke Decazes, who had taken the foreign affairs portfolio on November 26. At the time when I am writing these lines, Duke Decazes has been dead for two years; so, I can only speak with emotion of the intimate relationships that I maintained with him during the four years of his ministry and which I then maintained until his death. I found in him the most amiable and courteous leader, at the same time as the most distinguished; all his actions towards me were those of the most perfect benevolence, of complete trust, of the most sincere friendship. If the qualities of the private man were great, those of the public man perhaps outweighed the others: high intelligence, political flair, finesse and good grace, so useful in dealing with men, and when necessary firmness, great patience in the conduct of affairs made him a statesman of high value. There are few who have contributed as much as he to recovering France from its disasters and giving it back the respect it had regained when the conservatives, and he, in particular, left power after the bad elections of October 14, 1877, and which it has perhaps not preserved to the same degree, since the power and destiny of France fell into the hands of the Republicans.

The memory of Duke Decazes must be dear, not only to his friends, but to all good French people, to those who suffered from the disasters of the homeland and who enjoy its recovery, who love its glory and who would have liked to ensure its destined by returning the monarchy to him. He did not have this happiness, and I do not know if it is part of God's plans that all those who collaborated with him should be happier. Moreover, I have been well favored throughout my diplomatic career and I have only had to praise the benevolence, the confidence and the procedures of all the ministers who have directed the department, Count de Rémusat, the Duke de Broglie and the Duke Decazes, and, for a very short time, the Marquis de Banneville. I offer them here a very affectionate expression of my gratitude.

Appendix

INTERVIEW WITH M. THIERS, LB TUESDAY NOVEMBER 21, 1871.

Account written by Mr. de Gontaut and preserved in his papers.

A telegraphic dispatch from Mr. Thiers, which arrived in Navailles on Sunday, urged me to come and see him in Versailles, in order to discuss, he said, an issue concerning my person and public service. I did not hesitate to answer his call. I imagined that it was a question of the Holy Father: all the newspapers, in fact, announced his departure from Rome; perhaps Mr. Thiers would ask me to pick him up in Marseille and take him to Pau, where he intended to offer him, in the name of France, generous and free hospitality.

As I was getting into the wagon, a few words from my friend J. de Maillé cast serious doubt on the accuracy of my impressions. As soon as I arrived in Mr. Thiers' office at Versailles, I was completely undeceived.

I beg your pardon, he said kindly, for having brought you from so far away, but I want to make you an ambassador. I cried out.

"Yes, an ambassador," he added, "and you will fill this position very well. It has become quite impossible to retain the diplomats who served the Empire; I must put them aside as much as possible. It is important to have two good ambassadors in Vienna and Berlin... It is to Berlin that I ask you to go.

"Are you thinking about it? I said. It would already be a big thing to send me ambassador anywhere; but, in Berlin, to deal with affairs with the most skillful, most rebellious diplomat of modern times, obviously I will not be able to suffice for this task. Besides, very great difficulties are still pending between Prussia and us; M. de Bismarck is the implacable enemy of France; There is no embarrassment that he does not seek to create for us at every moment, regardless of those which result directly from the treaty. It is to harm France that he withdraws hundreds of millions from circulation, out of the compensation we paid him; it is for the same purpose that he became so hostile to Catholic interests; finally, we find him everywhere, before us, in Europe, and it is against such a man, against such a rough jousting, against such an experienced diplomat, as fine, that you are thinking of sending an inexperienced man, a man who does not know public affairs only for having handled them in a very small way, in the general councils, or for having followed them very humbly, as suits me, in the National Assembly. Inevitably, I will be fooled by him, to use a vulgar expression; it doesn't matter if my

personality perishes, but by failing, I compromise the interests of France. I cannot incur such responsibility.”

You greatly exaggerate the difficulties of your task: they are much less than you fear. All the main points of the treaty between Prussia and us are settled. If there are any outstanding issues, they are the subject of special and separate negotiations which are being handled in Frankfurt. Mr. de Bismarck said to me on several occasions: “If you have a friend to whom you would like to please, send him to us, he will be with us like a rooster in dough.”

Then he went into a few details to make me understand that our policy towards Prussia was very simple, very clear, that above all, the attitude of the representative of France had to be dignified, and he was kind enough to assure myself, in terms useless to relate here, that I was the man indicated in this circumstance by my name and my character.

“If difficulties arise,” he said to me, “we will give you, as often as is useful, instructions, and if it concerns commercial matters, for example, we will send you a special negotiator. The Berlin court is very aristocratic; we are very keen to have a great lord; I can assure you that you will be perfectly received there.”

Mr. President, I said to him, you know me well enough to be convinced that, if I accept an embassy, I will nonetheless remain entirely what I am, that is to say a monarchist and legitimist.”

“I was perfectly wrong,” he replied; This is in no way an objection for me, in the system in which I have placed myself. Didn't M. de Larcy do the same? I could have Casimir Périer tell you again that he also used the same language. Moreover, the Prussian court is entirely legitimist. The king is legitimist; Mr. de Bismarck told me that France certainly had monarchy as its future; he wants fusion.

"I know some of the princes, he told me; If you wish, I am very willing to help you in the accomplishment of this great act."

I returned again to the objection based on my insufficiency and, this time, he said to me:

"No one, you must understand, knows better than me that there are not more serious interests for us, more important, than our relations with Prussia; I certainly have a lot of friendship for you, but you will certainly not believe that I would give in to my taste, to the detriment of these great interests. If I send you to Berlin, it is because I judge that they will be in good hands."

It was quite embarrassing for me to respond to an argument of this sort. However, it was not the one who broke my resistance: he was only to come at the end of our long interview.

You will certainly allow me, Mr. President, to put before you yet another serious objection. An ambassador primarily represents the foreign policy of his country; but he is also the representative of its general policy. Now, let me tell you, there are certain points, certain sides of your line of conduct, which I cannot approve of. In some responses to the addresses of the general councils, for example, you seem to assert too much your inclination for the definitive establishment of the republic. However, this is not the meaning of the Bordeaux Pact, it is not for this purpose that the Assembly has conferred power on you. The republic was then simply a fact, and it was agreed that this fact would only be temporary. That you do not lean towards the monarchy, so be it; but you must not lean towards the republic. Please believe me, this tendency, which we suppose among you, rightly or wrongly, frightens the conservatives, and this is undoubtedly what most favors

aspirations towards Bonapartism... Stay with the majority; it will be the security of the country and your glory.”

While I was speaking, Mr. Thiers exclaimed several times, accusing me of being unfair about his actions or of not having understood his language. He refused to lean towards the definitive establishment of the republic:

“But I cannot, he said, even with the provisional, not seek to establish a regular order to accomplish this work, I must take, from the major parties in the Assembly, the most honorable men as collaborators. Look at my ministry... I only want to organize the country, deliver France from the Prussians, heal its wounds, give it a strong army and do good things. Don't imagine that I care so much about the republic. In a year and a half, the Germans will, I hope, have evacuated our territory, the compensation will be paid in full; then the country will be able to do whatever suits it. He will keep the republic, or he will take the monarchy, as he sees fit.”

Mr. Thiers continued in this tone for a certain time, and I gathered from his language the impression that his desire was not to separate himself from the majority.

Give me three days to think, Mr. President; It is impossible for me to take such a serious resolution any sooner. I belong to a party and I have friends I want to consult.”

“I cannot grant them to you; Prussia has been urging me for a long time to appoint an ambassador to Berlin. I have given you powerful reasons; don't go out from here without having accepted.

“I cannot, and if I had to decide right now, I would say no, because, in the absence of sufficient time to reflect on such an important matter, the most vulgar wisdom order to abstain.”

Well! think for forty-eight hours; but tell me you are more ready to accept than to refuse."

"But," I said to him again, "you are asking me for the most painful sacrifice, perhaps beyond my strength, that of going to represent my defeated, humiliated, disorganized country, to the victor himself. And what a winner!"

"Ah! he replied with a certain vivacity, do you think you are the only one to make sacrifices in such times? Didn't I travel all over Europe a few months ago to interest him in our cause, in the name of a government that I certainly didn't like? But it was about my country! Did I not go to Versailles for peace? Didn't I make the sacrifice of signing it? Have I not done many more? Do you have the right to refuse your share of sacrifice?"

I admit, this answer left me almost without reply. I left, not without thanking Mr. Thiers of the feelings that he was kind enough to show me, and I promised my answer in forty-eight hours. My emotion was great, we will understand that. I had to make, without having been prepared in any way, one of the most serious resolutions of my life.

I have consulted several people in whose judgment I have as much confidence as in their friendship for me. In general, I was advised to accept the offer made to me. It was put to me, among other reasons, that I was asked to go to a post of honor, in front of the enemy, to fire, and that such a request could only be refused with difficulty. I was also told that it was not precisely this or that government that I would represent, but the defeated, wounded France, to which it was necessary to try to restore its rank and its dignity... I accepted...